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Caste and Life Narrativ

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&
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Introduction
ar and Charu Gupta
Birth Is My Fatal Accident": Introduction to Caste and
Narratives 1

e narratives ranging from autobiographies and biographies to blogs and
torial art have historically played a vital role in both the affirmation as well
nterrogation of caste identities. However, serious study of life narratives
relationship to caste is still relatively underdeveloped. The scholarship on
te (or the *varna-jati* complex) is vast, as is the study of life narratives as a
re—it is the conjunction of the two that especially merits sustained scru-
y. The study of caste is animated by a Critical Caste Studies that takes its
ring from Dalit Studies, a lively area of scholarly endeavor in recent years,
order to explore diverse phenomena within the *varna-jati* complex. The
itiny of life narratives in conjunction with caste promises to expand the
pe of inquiry into life narratives by bringing new cultural contexts into
discussion and by enabling the formulation of new theoretical questions
genre. Such an investigation contributes to the study of caste by directing
ention to fresh archives and by making available for analysis in powerful
ys questions of identity. The critical work of studying caste in conjunction
h life narratives is most pertinent with regard to India but includes the
ith Asian diaspora as well as other countries such as Japan.

Lives
upta
ing Self, Writing Caste: Recovering the Life of Santram BA 16

rough the life writing of Santram BA (1887–1998), a veteran Hindi writer
l radical caste social reformer from Punjab, this essay illuminates a social
tory of caste in North India. Santram started writing in 1912 and pub-
ed more than eighty books, including his memoir *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav*.
hile Santram has remained on the margins of academic scholarship, the
y underlines that his life narrative produced multiple meanings of caste,
ere on the one hand, he became a staunch advocate of intercaste marriages,
l on the other, he enacted a language of caste reform and respectability
h ambiguous implications. This contradictory straddling makes his life
rative both a complex and politicized form of resistance and critique of
te, while simultaneously appearing as an account of accepted caste models
l messages.

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Tapan Basu
The Dalit Personal Narrative in Hindi: Reflections on a Long Literary Lineage 44

My essay is an attempt to track the long literary lineage, stretching back to the early decades of the twentieth century, of the emergent genre of the Dalit personal narrative in Hindi, which has begun to make itself more and more visible in North India since the concluding decades of the century. I shall argue that these narratives are, without a doubt, the legatees of a tradition of anticaste writing and a vibrant, though largely unremarked upon, Dalit print culture that flourished in Uttar Pradesh through the 1920s and beyond. Special reference is made, in this regard, to the literary work of Swami Achhutanand, the doyen of the anticaste movement in North India, and to his influence on later generations of undercaste writers in the so-called Hindi belt. The essay also contains some reflections on the nature of the Dalit counterpublic, which comprises the social constituency addressed by the contemporary Dalit personal narrative in Hindi.

Parthasarathi Muthukkaruppan
Tamil Dalit Literature: Aesthetics, Politics, and Life Narratives 64

By critically engaging with vernacular Tamil discussions on the category of Dalit literature, this essay argues that the specific aesthetics of life narratives and their ontological determination of the authorial subject have in many ways played a historical role in shaping the entire field of Dalit literature in Tamil. Further, this essay brings to the fore the contradiction between such ontological determination and the historico-political nature of the Dalit subject. In doing so, it also critically engages with a larger problem: the relationship between the aesthetics and politics of Dalit literature.

Laura R. Brueck
Bending Biography: The Creative Intrusions of "Real Lives" in Dalit Fiction 77

This paper focuses on the writings of Uday Prakash and Ajay Navaria, both Delhi-based Hindi-language authors whose literary work focuses on the dynamics of caste in contemporary India, to consider each author's innovative use of metafictional narrative techniques to blur the boundaries between "real" and fictional life narratives. I argue that reading these texts through the critical lens of postrealism allows us to reconsider the apparently arbitrary generic distinctions between auto/biography and fiction in Dalit narratives with a careful analysis of the strategically interventionist employment of real lives in Dalit fiction.

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Lives in Visual and Performance Cultures

Swarnavel Eswaran
Periyar as a Biopic: Star Persona, Historical Events, and Politics 93

This essay engages with the biographical picture *Periyar* (2007) to analyze how history is represented through the life of one of the most significant revolutionary figures in Indian politics of the last century. It explores the representation of Periyar through the persona of Sathyaraj, a leading star of Tamil cinema, and analyzes the episodic structure of the film to study the strength and weaknesses of making a biopic on the life and times of an iconic leader for a mainstream audience. On the one hand, such a project entails addressing all the significant events along with the key figures who played a major role in Periyar's revolutionary politics of dismantling caste and religion. On the other, the lengthy storyline based on Periyar's eventful life disallows the time for reflection and the focus on the deeper philosophy of Periyar's radicalism, for instance, his investment in public drama as a theater of protest.

Bindu Menon
Affective Returns: Biopics as Life Narratives 116

This essay is an exploration of caste and life narratives in the specific genre of biopics. Addressing itself to traces, absences, conjectural histories, and public discourse, the essay tries to understand an event of caste violence in early twentieth-century Travancore and its continuing relevance in structuring relations in cinema. It explores the impasses in normative history writing in the context of early cinema and argues how powerful counterarchival imaginations in cinema limn a counterhistorical narrative through the force of affective veracity.

Y. S. Alone
Caste Life Narratives, Visual Representation, and Protected Ignorance 140

Caste life narratives in India that have emerged through Ambedkarite social, cultural, and political movements have challenged the Brahmanical metanarratives of aesthetic canons as well as the nature of language and representation. Representation in this case is not an abstract entity but operates more at a physical level, empowering people to express their experiences in language. This essay is an attempt to interrogate pictorial representations that artists produce from the idea of caste life experiences. The essay also attempts to unfold a perceptual means of understanding as well as conceptual formulations through the critical framework of "protected ignorance." The paper addresses the works of artists who have used caste to enter the realm of pictorial space to narrate the stark realities of caste life ignored by liberals who canonized modernist aesthetics as Brahmanical. The essay offers brief explanations of theoretical formulations of protected ignorance, a critical account of different interpretative frameworks that evolved in twentieth-century and contemporary India, and analyses of a range of pictorial representations that have come through critics of caste life.

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Shailaja Paik
Mangala Bansode and the Social Life of Tamasha: Caste, Sexuality, and Discrimination in Modern Maharashtra 170

Over the past three decades there has been an increasing academic interest in the field of popular culture and cultural studies. However, in the Indian context there is little study about the popular practices of caste-based cultural forms and sexual labor. Most significantly, scholars have rarely considered the so-called "immoral" and "vulgar" "folk art" of Tamasha (folk theater) and the lives of Tamasgiranchya (Tamasha performers) worthy of systematic analyses. In this essay, I deploy the oral history and life narrative of a Dalit Tamasgir woman, Mangalatai Bansode, to examine the hitherto unexplored potentials and problems of intimate and interlocking technologies of "deviant" sexuality, labor, and struggle for survival; the community's social, cultural, and political battles; private and public patriarchy; and Maharashtra state's politics regarding "folk culture." I provide micro-level details of Tamasgiranchya's historical experiences of poverty, hunger, education or the lack thereof, occupation, and the strategic deployment of *khandani* business, body politics, and sexual economy of erotic excess. I unravel how ruling elites both in colonial and postcolonial periods constructed Tamasha as a despised form of hereditary performance, and how Tamasgir women have had to struggle constantly to preserve their honor within and without the Dalit community, enhance their social status, and earn their family's livelihood. Ironically, Tamasha continues to be a degraded form of performance that has provided possibilities and power, however limited, to some women.

Law, Society, and Narratives of the Self

Mukul Sharma
Brahmanical Activism as Eco-Casteism: Reading the Life Narratives of Bindeshwar Pathak, Sulabh International, and "Liberated" Dalits 199

This essay centers on the life of Bindeshwar Pathak, a Brahmin by caste, narrated by himself and others. Pathak is the founder of the much-celebrated Sulabh International, a prominent environmental initiative working for the abolition of scavenging, which has largely been done by the Balmiki Dalit castes in India. Through Pathak's life writing and Sulabh's varied literature, along with interviews with Sulabh workers, scavengers, and Dalit activists who narrate their lives and the implications of Pathak and Sulabh for them, the essay argues that Pathak and his environmental movement often deploys caste and Dalits to reform and reinvent Brahmanical Hinduism with a human face. The retelling of various lives underlines that Pathak's attempts to "liberate" scavengers are often mediated through a caste-bound Hindu religious, community, cultural, and everyday practice. Pathak's anticaste plank is thus constantly blunted by a Hindu religious ecology that positions kindness against rights, charity against liberty, and reform from above against radical change, marking the limits of Pathak's life narrative vis-à-vis caste.

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Sumit Baudh
Invisibility of "Other" Dalits and Silence in the Law 222

For the first time, the 2011 census of India counted a population "other" than male or female. This essay takes a cue from the census and traces the invisibility of "other" Dalits, while attempting to break the silence about them in the law through life narratives. Formerly considered "untouchable" in the deeply unequal and hierarchical caste system of India, Dalits are also known as Scheduled Castes (SC) in the legal parlance. The invisibility of "other" Dalits and the silence about them is located in an emerging legal moment in which transgender persons are compared with "untouchable" Dalits but there is no legal understanding of persons who are both transgender *and* Dalit. The knowledge that comes from examining overlapping vulnerabilities would help strengthen tools, instruments, and rhetoric designed to address violence, discrimination, and social disempowerment globally. More particularly, given the background from which this essay has emerged, the ongoing campaign for decriminalization of sodomy in India and the upcoming "curative petition" in the Supreme Court could be informed by the "intersectional" understanding presented in this essay. Histories of discrimination, oppression, and indignities originating in the caste system in India could be pivotal to informing the broader agenda of liberation and human rights for all.

Out of India

Shweta Majumdar Adur and Anjana Narayan
Stories of Dalit Diaspora: Migration, Life Narratives, and Caste in the US 244

In conventional academic scholarship, "diaspora" overwhelmingly is treated as a homogenous category. It is only in recent years that intersectional analysis, by attending to internal fissures that include race, class, gender, and religion has complicated and simultaneously enriched the study of diasporic lives. This essay focuses on Dalit lives and experiences in the Indian diaspora in the US. We explore caste and casteism in the diaspora based on the life narratives of three Dalit activists in the US. The essay not only establishes the salience of using life narratives in the study of Dalit diasporic lives, it also makes a significant contribution to South Asian American scholarship in the US that has only minimally centered Dalits and Dalit lives in the US. We conclude this paper with some observations about possible future directions in the study of Dalit lives in the US.

June A. Gordon
Caste in Japan: The Burakumin 265

While most writing on caste emanates from South Asia, there are other countries and cultures that operate under this feudal yet enduring system, Japan being one of them. The Japanese group who bear this yoke are called the Burakumin, individuals who have for generations inherited their outcaste status largely through the professions of their ancestors. Access to these communities is not only extremely difficult for "outsiders" but is also fraught

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with contradictions, as support is welcomed but the interpretation of what is found is scrutinized for political correctness. The Burakumin are a creation of Japanese history, but the experience of discrimination is all too real. The research for this essay involved several years of engagement with numerous schools and community organizations throughout Japan in areas with large populations of Burakumin. In particular, my focus was on the teachers and scholars who had committed their lives to working with Burakumin youth while simultaneously educating the larger society of Japan in changing a feudal mindset. This paper presents narratives of some of these individuals and the reciprocal impact of their work on their lives and those with whom they worked.

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In Remembrance

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S. Shankar, Remembering Barbara Harlow: Resistance and Life Writing 304

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Sam Ferguson
Why Does Life Writing Talk about Science?: Foucault, Rousseau, and the Early *Journal Intime* 307

This article examines the reasons why life writing makes use of discourses from the natural sciences. It focuses on the emergence of autobiography and the *journal intime* in France at the moment of a fundamental shift toward the modern *episteme* (identified by Foucault), which is both historical and person-centered.

Kathryn Sederberg
Writing through Crisis: Time, History, Futurity in German Diaries of the Second World War 323

This article considers how diary writing mediates temporal consciousness, especially during periods of crisis. Through examples of German civilian diaries written at the end of the Second World War, I show how diaries reflect changing notions of history and futurity, producing radically presentist modes of self-representation.

Meliz Ergin
Derrida's Otobiographies 342

This essay approaches autobiography studies through a philosophical perspective and explores Derrida's notion of "otobiography" to elaborate on the twin problem of identity and writing. After examining the autobiographical thread in Derrida's work and raising questions pertaining to genre and autonomy, the essay focuses on *Monolingualism of the Other; or, the Prosthesis of Origin* to show how Derrida's theories of selfhood, language, and writing work themselves out in practice.

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ARTICLES

Andrew Jewell
Why Obscure the Record?: The Psychological Context of Willa Cather's Ban on Letter Publication 399

This essay provides an explanation for American author Willa Cather's confounding decision to ban the publication of her letters, arguing that one must understand the specific personal and psychological contexts of the execution of her final will in 1943. Since the ban on publication has now been lifted by Cather's executors, the essay uses ample direct evidence from the letters themselves to analyze the concerns that led to Cather's choice. I argue that Cather's ban emerged from a time of grief, physical pain, and growing hopelessness about the future while the world was at war.

Jayne Lewis
"Strange Imagination": Valentine Greatrakes's Healing Aura and the Autobiographical Impulse 425

The controversial Irish Protestant healer Valentine Greatrakes's 1666 autobiography is an under-appreciated text in the history of anglophone life writing, one that invites us to rethink the early history of a genre that has long been linked to a spatialized, specular, and mimetic model of the self. In contrast to the post-Lockean texts that posit that model, *A Brief Account of Mr Valentine Greatrak's and Divers of the Strange Cures by Him Lately Performed* incorporates Greatrakes's unorthodox method of healing by touch over time into the process of literary self-representation. As it plays between poles of distance and proximity, objectivity and contingency, shadow and substance the resulting textual "perform[ance]" may be historicized in terms of late-seventeenth-century conceptions of what Greatrakes's implied reader, the pneumatic chemist Robert Boyle, called the "little atmospheres" that surround human bodies—"atmospheres" that anticipate Walter Benjamin's modern notion of the aura but treat aura as a uniquely communicative aspect of the person. Greatrakes's shamanistic practice binds his readers to his patients, thereby developing a therapeutic form of transpersonal, transhistorical, transgeneric personal identity uniquely realized in the literary text.

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Anna Poletti
Putting Lives on the Record: The Book as Material and Symbol in Life Writing 460

This article develops an understanding of the role of life writing in putting marginalized voices on the record by examining the material and symbolic history of the book and its relationship with life writing. Taking two key points in the history of the book as its focus, the article argues that "the record" is a material and symbolic performative site that authorizes a life writer's claims to knowledge and experience. Through a reading of Jean-Paul Sartre's 1963 autobiography *Les Mots* (*The Words*) the article demonstrates the importance of the book to how life writers and scholars of life writing conceptualize the cultural, political, and social importance of telling stories from life.

Linda Zygutis
On the Lecture Circuit with Gertrude Stein's Portraits 485

This essay intervenes in recent scholarship on modernism and celebrity that treats fame as a unidirectional performance by emphasizing the extent to which Gertrude Stein's celebrity is the product of external artifice: particularly, the invocation of preexisting social types drawn from mass culture and circulated by publishers and promoters eager to market Stein to an audience expecting a very specific model of (feminine) success. Having become a best seller in no small part due to its "gossipy" look into the glamorous world of the Parisian art movement, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* transformed Stein into a bona fide star. But while Stein had actively courted commercial success, her first taste of celebrity came with a discomfiting loss of control. With so many people eager to "know" her, Stein felt her own sense of self slipping away. By pairing critical analysis of Stein's own thoughts on celebrity with her often-overlooked *Lectures in America*, I argue that Stein's lectures, presented as they were to audiences expecting the same "gossipy" depictions they received in the autobiography, are not only a subversion of the expectations associated with fame but a frank depiction of its failures, a self-conscious demonstration of the artifice of celebrity.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

I have what feels like a fairly reliable memory of reading James R. Mellow *Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein and Company* in my first year of college, b I can't recall what initially drew me to the book. Although it's likely I ha heard of Stein by then in one of my introductory English classes, I'm certai I hadn't read any of her work, and I suspect it might only have been the sinu ous art-deco typography on the cover of the 1982 Avon paperback editio that prompted me to buy it. Whatever it was that called out to me, I'm forev grateful for the appeal. I found Mellow's account of Stein's life and world a captivating as any novel, and it set me on an often baffling, always thrillin course of reading that stoked my own literary aspirations even as it unravele some of my aesthetic prejudices. After devouring *The Autobiography of Ali B. Toklas*, which I found in its entirety in the Vintage *Selected Writings of Ge trude Stein*, I worked my way, much more slowly, through all the other sele tions and then tackled the complete versions of many of the works excerpte in that anthology. My fascination with Stein persisted into graduate scho where it culminated—and apparently exhausted itself—in a not terribly orig nal seminar paper comparing *Tender Buttons* with Francis Ponge's *Le parti p des choses*. While I certainly still admire Stein's genius, and while I'm indebte to her for introducing me to the pleasures and profits to be gained from wri ing that doesn't wear its meaning on its sleeve, until this past week I hadn read her in decades. I don't know what happened to my copy of *Charme Circle*, but I keep the fat, now-yellowed *Selected Writings* on my shelf amon the other books I can't quite bring myself to give away. While I was writin this paragraph, I took it down and happily surrendered an hour or so to Stein inimitable prose.

I have to thank Linda Zygutis for reigniting a spark of my lapsed devotio to Stein. In her essay in this issue of *Biography*, Zygutis recounts the famous inscrutable author's 1934 lecture tour to the United States following the com mercial success of her uncharacteristically scrutable *Autobiography of Alice Toklas*. Reflecting on the sometimes sensationalist press coverage of Stein appearances, the efforts of her publishers to exploit her notoriety, and Stein struggle to retain control over her own image and to preserve her artistic in tegrity, Zygutis gives us a portrait of the artist as a somewhat reluctant "pe sonality" chafing against the expectations of a public whose interest in her w

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Editors' Note iii

INTERNATIONAL YEAR IN REVIEW

The International Year in Review is a collection of short, site-specific essays by scholars from around the world on the year's most influential publications in life writing in the countries, regions, and languages in which they specialize. This year's International Year in Review includes entries from Australia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Colombia, Curaçao, Finland, France, Iceland, India, Italy, Korea, México, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Spain, and the UK, along with two essays from the US, one on biography and one on memoir.

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for

Rohith Vermula

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"MY BIRTH IS MY FATAL ACCIDENT"
INTRODUCTION TO CASTE AND LIFE NARRATIVES

S. SHANKAR AND CHARU GUPTA

This special issue of *Biography* foregrounds "caste" and "life narratives" as reciprocally generative sites of serious study. We begin with the notion that the conjunction of a social phenomenon called "caste" with a genre of representation called "life narratives" deserves special scholarly attention. We are not the first to bring caste and life narratives together in this manner. As the essays collected here as well as the Selected Bibliography attest, this issue builds on previously existing work. We acknowledge such work while proposing that the essays here are unprecedented in the range of languages, archives, cultural traditions, and subgenres engaged, as well as in the kinds of theoretical discussions launched. Through these essays we hope to accomplish a twofold task: bringing discussions of caste to the scholarly study of life narratives and, reciprocally, foregrounding a nuanced and critical awareness of life narratives in explorations of caste.

In our own work, both of us have grappled with caste in the context of India in different ways. Shankar is a novelist and a literary and cultural critic, who in his 2012 book *Flesh and Fish Blood: Postcolonialism, Translation, and the Vernacular* explores the rich potential of vernacular literary expressions for representations of caste, with a particular focus on Tamil literature, including Dalit Tamil literature. He underlines how vernacular materials were often politically progressive. Part of his argument critiques postcolonial theory as presently configured. He also engages with caste in detail in his forthcoming novel, *Ghost in the Tamarind*. Charu is a feminist historian who in her 2016 book *The Gender of Caste: Representing Dalits in Print* brings together two complex markers of difference and inequality by rethinking the history of caste from a gendered perspective and by exploring its inextricable connections with popular culture, with a particular focus on Hindi print material of colonial North India. She argues that caste and gender are not only constitutive of the social;

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caste is central to how gender is reproduced. Our scholarly interests have cohered around how to historicize issues of embodiment and personhood from diverse regional and temporal frames. In different ways, both of us have a deep interest in how one might find caste in life narratives and how caste narratives may resist easy incorporation into dominant domains of academia or the "universal."

Life narratives have long been a constitutive archive and a performative mode for the oppressed. For example, Houston A. Baker remarks, "The locus classicus of Afro-American literary discourse is the slave narrative" (31). The slave narrative bears witness to the life of the slave. For similar reasons to do with witnessing, the experiences of some castes (some "caste-lives," in one potent formulation) have proven of especial interest to scholars. Generally, these have been Dalit ("untouchable") or Dalitbahujan ("lower caste") lives. In India, life narratives have been central to the recent boom in Dalit writings in the vernacular, particularly in Marathi, Hindi, and Tamil, which provide Dalits a means for declaring their own subjective agency. Various forms of life narratives—autobiography, *testimonio*, diary, confessional poetry, biopics—have been critical in testifying to the breadth and ferocity of caste oppression *and* for articulating a language of caste dissent and protest. While life narratives on and of caste raise questions of political inequality, they also underline the complex and subtle manner in which everyday lives and their retellings are sites for the social reproduction of a hegemonic caste order, as well as an enabling ground for the development of practices of resistance.

This special issue, then, acknowledges the unique status of Dalit and Dalitbahujan perspectives (of anti-caste radicals like Phule, Periyar, and Ambedkar, for example) in shaping a field of study such as "Caste and Life Narratives"; at the same time, the issue takes to heart that caste is not the lived reality of Dalits and Dalitbahujans alone and, accordingly, proceeds from the notion that the critical study of caste cannot be their burden alone. An "upper caste" Bania (such as M. K. Gandhi, touched on in Laura Brueck's essay in this issue) has as much a "caste life" as a Dalit. While not all "upper caste" life narratives acknowledge caste as directly as Dalit life narratives do, they nevertheless remain marked, even in their silence, by caste. Indeed, it has been argued (by M. S. S. Pandian, for example, in *Brahmin and Non-Brahmin: Genealogies of the Tamil Political Present*) that such silence is itself a mark of caste privilege—after all, is not the ability to ignore caste in itself a mark of privilege?

In this context, a useful distinction can and should be made between Dalit Studies and what we might term Critical Caste Studies. The former is the study of Dalit archives and lives, the latter the critical and interrogative study of any aspect of culture marked by caste. An analogy might be drawn

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here with the study of race in the United States. African American Studies is not the same as Critical Race Theory, though the former might offer an indispensable animating force to the latter. In a thoroughly racialized society like the United States, the critical study of race cannot be the burden of African Americans alone, and so it is with caste. Critical Caste Studies is vitally animated by Dalit Studies but is not coterminous with it. Additionally, a Critical Caste Studies acknowledges the existence of caste structures across the world (in Japan, for example, as indicated in June Gordon's essay) without in any way minimizing the virulence of caste within South Asia. Human Rights Watch offers this broad definition of caste in a global context:

> Caste is descent-based and hereditary in nature. It is a characteristic determined by one's birth into a particular caste, irrespective of the faith practiced by the individual. Caste denotes a system of rigid social stratification into ranked groups defined by descent and occupation. Under various caste systems throughout the world, caste divisions also dominate in housing, marriage, and general social interaction—divisions that are reinforced through the practice and threat of social ostracism, economic boycotts, and even physical violence.

A Critical Caste Studies might take as its purview this view of caste even as it learns from the exciting work within Dalit Studies.

In the context of India (with which caste is most often associated and with which all the essays in this collection save one are concerned), "caste" is the ubiquitous term for a form of social organization based on a mishmash of associated ideas of hierarchy, (notional) profession, ritual ideas of purity, endogamy, and (Hindu) scriptural stricture. Put in other words, "caste" is a protean category of social difference and a system of inequality based on hierarchy and heredity, ideologies of contamination, and stigmatization and exclusion (Bannerjee-Dube; Dirks 3–18; Bayly 1–96, 144–86; Shankar, *Flesh* 29–36). Caste is at one and the same time economic (in that it has consequences for how wealth is distributed), political (how power is distributed), and social (how status is assessed). It would be a mistake to think that the ways in which these three dimensions of caste map onto one another are predictable and uniform—a Brahmin priest in a village might, for example, be higher in social status than an economically more affluent landlord (as indeed made evident in the anticaste crusader Periyar's life, explored in Swarnavel Eswaran's essay). At the same time caste is not without its specificities, such that generations of scholars have found a relatively coherent object of study in it. This is why in some respects it seems, as V. Geetha and S. V. Rajadurai have suggested, that caste might be more usefully termed the "varna-jati complex" (xiii). The terms "varna-jati complex" and "caste" describe the same social phenomenon from

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different vantage points—the former from that of the vernacular and the latter from that of the transnational (Shankar, *Flesh* 34). *Varna* and *jati* are two terms commonly found in Indian languages denoting caste. *Varna* is a more abstract and scriptural term indicating the four broad groups into which castes are supposed to be divided (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, with the *varna*-less "untouchables" or Dalits regarded as outcaste outsiders); while *jati* is a more locally situated and ethnographically relevant category, varying in its hundreds, if not thousands, across the length and breadth of not only India but the whole of South Asia. Ishita Banerjee-Dube underlines that the *varna*-model represents a "book view of caste," while the *jati*-model signifies a "field-view" or the actual reality of caste (xvii).

As with caste, so too with life narrative, which is a similarly imprecise term for modes of depicting a life. In this collection we intend the term to cover a variety of modes of representing "actual lives" in whole or in fragments—in autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, ethnographic interviews, nonfictional references within fiction, biopics, legal testimonies, art work, memoirs, Facebook posts, blogs, confessional poetry, and, lastly and most tragically, a suicide note. In using this term, we sometimes stretch the meaning of the word "narrative." We deploy life narratives in a generically fluid and wide variety of ways, as we wish to include not only biographies and autobiographies, but indeed to recognize the multiplicity of subgenres in which lives are narrated. It has seemed to us better to use the term "life narrative" rather than such alternative terms as "life writing" or "life representation" (not all texts are written, after all; and representation seems at once too theoretically loaded and vague a term). "Life narrative" has seemed the best of the terms on offer because more often than not, as an object of study, a life offers itself to us in some (fragmentary or otherwise) narrated form.

Life narratives are distinguished by their peculiar claims of authenticity established through a division between the fictional and the nonfictional. These claims of authenticity are, of course, unstable and continually negotiated, as Philippe Lejeune argues through the related notions of an autobiographical pact, the referential pact, and the readerly contract. Taken together, these ideas suggest both the insistence of life narrative genres (to expand the point beyond Lejeune's focus on autobiography) on a referential reality that exists separate from the text and the difficulty of articulating the difference between such a reality and that of, say, a novel. Recognizing a similar difficulty, Leigh Gilmore and G. Thomas Couser explore the ways in which life narrative genres may be said to be in a referential relationship to actual bodies, disabled, gendered, or otherwise. In the context of caste, these referential considerations, and the question of who "the contract" or "the pact" is with,

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are posed with a specificity to which it is essential to attend. With whom does Gandhi contract in writing his (nationalist) autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*? And who does Bama have in mind in her Dalit autobiography *Karukku* (discussed in Parthasarthi Muthukkaruppan's essay)? Both Gandhi and Bama are Indian writers, albeit separated by language, period, gender, and caste. How, then, does Gandhi's contractual relationship with his reader relate to Bama's with hers? Such questions, which are not amenable to easy answers, are at the heart of this collection.

The life narrative genres engaged in this collection vary, often reflecting the disciplinary positioning of the contributing author. When we were making our selections for this issue, we were keen that the essays address how caste identities are imprinted and challenged in different genres of life narratives. We also hoped to start crossdisciplinary conversations on the subject between the humanities and the social sciences. We believe that juxtaposing essays from different disciplinary contexts can in itself help us in foregrounding differences of methodologies and epistemologies and in contextualizing some of the trends we witness in our fields of study. We were further interested in foregrounding diverse languages, regions, modes, and time periods, including the colonial and postcolonial. Finally, we were keen to extend our analysis to include communities other than Hindu (to see how caste is represented in Christian life narratives, for example); the Indian diaspora, an often neglected area of study; and regions where similar structures of inequality can be discerned and where race, for example, may be juxtaposed to caste.

The twelve essays that we have chosen—and that then underwent intense discussion amounting to a kind of peer review, including at a three-day workshop convened in Honolulu—thus represent a range of disciplines and methodological perspectives. The disciplines represented include art criticism, education, film studies, history, law, literary criticism, management studies, and sociology. In making our selections, we sought a diversity of languages, regions, genres and themes, and identities and personae:

LANGUAGES

- Hindi: Laura Brueck, Tapan Basu, Charu Gupta
- Japanese: June Gordon
- Malayalam: Bindu Menon
- Marathi: Shailaja Paik
- Tamil: Swarnavel Eswaran, Parthasarathi Muthukkaruppan

REGIONS WITHIN INDIA AND OUTSIDE

- Japan: June Gordon
- Kerala: Bindu Menon
- Maharashtra: Shailaja Paik

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- North India: Laura Brueck
- Punjab: Charu Gupta
- Tamil Nadu: Parthasarathi Muthukkaruppan, Swarnavel Eswaran

GENRES AND THEMES

- autobiography: Tapan Basu, Charu Gupta
- Brahmanical formulations: Mukul Sharma
- cinema: Bindu Menon, Swarnavel Eswaran
- education: June Gordon
- environmental studies: Mukul Sharma
- gender: Bindu Menon, Charu Gupta, Shailaja Paik
- law: Sumit Baudh
- literature: Laura Brueck, Parthasarathi Muthukaruppan, Tapan Basu
- performance, theater, and narration in folk forms: Shailaja Paik
- queer sexualities: Sumit Baudh
- reformist writings: Charu Gupta
- visual arts: Y. S. Alone

IDENTITIES AND PERSONAE

- Dalit Tamasha performer Mangalatai Bansode: Shailaja Paik
- Burakumin of Japan: June Gordon
- Dalit Hindi writers like Ajay Navaria as well as Namishray and Bechain: Laura Brueck, Tapan Basu (respectively)
- Dalit Tamil writers and literary critics: Parthasarathi Muthukaruppan
- diasporic Dalit activists and movements: Shweta Adur and Anjana Narayanan
- an international NGO and its Brahmin founder Bindeswar Pathak: Mukul Sharma
- the anticaste icon Periyar: Swarnavel Eswaran
- Dalit actress P. K. Rosy: Bindu Menon
- anticaste Shudra reformer Santram BA: Charu Gupta

The selections have in common a committed exploration of the embodied nature of caste and how social practices of violence, intimacy, touch, and stigmatization organize caste's peculiar and pervasive imprint on our lives. Taken together, the essays—which go beyond the conventional life narrative forms of autobiography and biography to include oral histories, biopics, ethnographic interviews, legal testimonies, and visual arts—provide us with discrete points of connection, dialogue, and debate.

In bringing together these essays from different disciplines, we are interested in the broad issues associated with life narratives and how such narratives are important sites for the construction *and* dismantling of identities. At the same time, we wish to underline the distinctive ways lives are (re)told when seen through the lens of caste, and how caste politics in turn are intertwined with questions of embodiment and personhood. In other words, we

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deploy life narratives as a method for materializing and interrogating caste lives and histories. We attempt to offer a bridge between life narratives and caste.

This special issue, then, stands at the intersection where caste meets life narrative; neither term by itself is a motivating element for this special issue—rather it is the conjunction of the two that gives the issue impetus. Western paradigms have often provided much of our theoretical capital for conceptualizing life narratives. Implicitly, as well as overtly, this special issue explores new paradigms by bringing "caste" and "life narrative" together. Here, the special issue might be seen as proceeding in the same vein as Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai's trenchant critiques of the facile use of Western paradigms in theorizing "experience," a category certainly crucial to life narratives. Both what constitutes a life and what constitutes a proper narrative of a life vary across cultures. What constitutes a life is not regarded in the same way in India as in the United States or in Japan, nor are the proper generic conventions through which a life is to be narrated. It is in the interest of capturing the specificity of life narratives in India (that is, their difference from similar narratives elsewhere) that David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn have identified

> a formulation of self-in-society that is more complex and subtle than a mutually exclusive opposition between an all-subsuming collectivity on the one hand, and a rampant individuality on the other. . . . [N]early all of them [life narratives in India], in one way or another, demonstrate that Indians present individual lives within a network of other lives and that they define themselves in relation to larger frames of reference, especially those of family, kin, caste, religion, and gender. (19)

Bindu Menon's exploration in her essay of the multiple renderings of Dalit actress K. Rosy's life in print and cinema well illustrates the different ways in which the balance between individuality and society (thematically common enough to scholarly study of life narratives across the world) is weighted in India. Menon's essay also points to further specifications arising out of caste—the narration of an "upper caste" Nair life cannot be the same as the narration of a Dalit one, for the latter is inevitably contestatory with regard to mainstream Indian society in a way the former need not be. The many gaps in the way Rosy's life has been rendered, as searchingly revealed by Menon, provides evidence in this regard.

At a theoretical level, some of these questions and problems are not unique to Indian life narratives or to caste lives. The essays in this special issue are wide ranging in their theoretical references, attending to whatever scholarship seems relevant and useful; at the same time, they take their points of orientation from theories and archives largely unknown outside of Dalit Studies or

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Critical Caste Studies (see, for example, Y. S. Alone's Ambedkarite Buddhist essay and Charu Gupta's recuperation of the lost voice of Santram BA). We suggest, therefore, that this collection might be regarded as a dialogue between life writing studies as constituted in the West and preoccupations coming out of caste life narratives. Our hope is to challenge canonical life writing studies from a postcolonial, Dalit, and Critical Caste Studies perspective, and at the same time, provoke new ways of entering into the burgeoning study of caste in India and elsewhere (as represented by June Gordon's essay on Japan and, in a different way, by Shweta Adur and Anjana Narayan's essay on Dalit activism in the South Asian diaspora in the US).

Taken together, the collection is interdisciplinary, interlinguistic, intercultural, international, and comparative. As should be easily evident, the comparative dimension is implicit throughout the collection. Though not represented here, a comparative study of caste can be extended to South Asian countries other than India such as Sri Lanka or Nepal; and, even beyond, for example to Africa or to Japan. Posing the comparative question along a different dimension, we might ask: how does caste compare to race or ethnicity as a system of social structuring? Dalits have often borrowed from the radical politics of African Americans—the most famous example being that of the Dalit Panthers. This form of comparison is also made evident in Adur and Narayan's essay. Less well known is the borrowing that has sometimes gone in the opposite direction. Scholars such as Gerald Berreman have argued that race in the US may sometimes be understood as a form of caste. Without denying either the particular salience or the ferocity of caste in India, the comparative study briefly sketched out here is meant to highlight the possibilities opened up for research into identity and difference when it comes to caste and similar social structures around the world.

Through this issue of *Biography*, then, we wish to present new research material along with novel "readings" and interpretations of figures and texts that challenge standard categories and concepts for exploring caste-worlds. The effort here is to go beyond simple binarisms in understanding life narratives of caste and to refuse reduction of the concept of life narrative to the mundane, the private, or the benign. The study of life narratives here emphasizes that stories of lives marked by caste tell us much about the private and the public, the self and the nation, the individual and the community, the intimate and the social, and the personal and political spheres.

Thematically, a number of concerns might be seen to anchor the collection. Through life narratives, we not only wish to recast caste, not only write/right caste histories, but also create a counter-archive of caste that may help us in reconstituting our theoretical, cultural, and historiographical perspectives.

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Recalcitrant histories of caste may be gleaned through life narratives. It is often argued that "upper caste" autobiographers celebrate their achievements with a sense of fulfillment and celebration, while Dalit narrations of the self are ambivalent and insecure, as they continue to search for an elusive freedom (R. Kumar 208, 260). Yet it is life narratives that have given Dalits a sense of agency and creative freedom. Thus, autobiographies and even imaginary biographies have been significant attempts by Dalits to produce their own histories, which have been silenced, erased, and marginalized in official archives and mainstream scholarship. Carlo Ginzburg shows us how an early manifesto on history "from below" appeared in the form of an "imaginary biography," where the intention was to salvage through a symbolic character a multitude of lives crushed by poverty and oppression (111–14). Similarly, Dalits have not only produced autobiographies but have also written a large number of biographies of strong and brave Dalit women and men of the past. The revolt of 1857 against British rule of India particularly has invoked imaginative and mythical memorialization of biographies of Dalit women heroes and martyrs like Jhalkari Bai and Uda Devi. These biographies—studied for example in Badri Narayan's book *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics* and Gupta's essay "Dalit 'Viranganas' and Reinvention of 1857"—pick up selective fragments from archival, official, and academic historical records and blend them with oral traditions and local memories of the community, rivaling the biographical histories of a nationalist figure like Rani Lakshmi Bai. They enmesh history, memory, and life narratives with visuals, posters, *melas* (public festivals), and public meetings. A multitude of lives that have been destined to count for nothing find their symbolic redemption in the depiction of immortal characters. Further, Dalits and Dalitbahujans have written life narratives and hagiographies of their own gods and ancestors, for example, Raidas, Deena Bhadri, and Eklavya. Finally, there has been a valorization of radical caste reformers like Phule, Periyar, and Ambedkar through life narratives. To take another example, life narratives of Poyikayil Yohannan, a radical Dalit thinker in twentieth-century Kerala, have created mythical accounts around him, which ultimately lead to a project of salvation, as Sanal Mohan has shown in "'Searching for Old Histories': Social Movements and the Project of Writing History in Twentieth-Century Kerala." Taken together, such imaginative constructions from the past of Dalit lives have provided Dalits with a history, identity, and agency. The creation of this counter-archive is a major project among Dalits that allows them to emerge as socially significant actors. It also breaks down and rejects categories of nonfiction and fiction, underlined in the invented term "autobiofictionalography" by Lynda Barry.

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Tied to this creation of a counter-archive is the role of print, education, and the vernacular in the relationship between caste and life narratives. Print and visual engagements with lived experiences are often couched in the vernacular. In this issue of *Biography*, we are thus attempting to discover vernacular inscriptions of caste through life narratives. The meanings of the vernacular have crossed disciplines, subjects, and themes, and are relevant for this issue. Scholars of South Asia have particularly grappled with the vernacular, whereby distinctions between the vernacular as culturally specific, local, traditional, indigenous, popular, raw, low, and associated with the masses versus the official and the academic (often expressed in the English language) as universal, cultivated, modern, sophisticated, classical, high, and, for the few, have been reiterated and challenged. Shankar has argued that a vernacular sensibility suggests "an orientation toward rootedness and cultural autonomy and specific locality" and "a sense of local habitation based on genealogy . . . without becoming synonymous with it" (*Flesh* 22, 24). And Uday Kumar views the vernacular less as a linguistic indicator than as "a space of thinking, argumentation and truth production which differs from, even as it interacts with, more professional, technically self-conscious writing" (7). The potential of deploying the vernacular in the study of life narratives and caste cannot be overestimated. The language of caste lives often needs a corporeal presence and nearness of lived experience that the vernacular can offer (Chatterjee 18).

Connected to this are equally important questions about "distinguished" and "ordinary" lives; and about cataclysmic, big events and everyday life. For example, what is the role of caste in biographies of Indian nationalist leaders like Gandhi and Nehru? Is a life narrative significant only when it is about heroes and "important" people? In an autobiography of a Dalit, caste becomes a salient feature of self-representation, which sometimes makes the writing "marketable." Caste provides the lens by which the reading audience views the author, and the author's narrative subjectivity is predicated often upon a stereotypical Dalit identity (see Parthasarthi Muthukkaruppan's essay in this regard). At the same time, life narratives apparently not attentive to caste can also carry within them caste markers and prejudices. Even when effaced and erased, how does caste reappear in life narratives of "upper caste" people? And how does caste work in everyday lived experiences of ordinary people, where it is not the grand narratives but daily lived moments that are recorded? How is the mundane, the ordinary, the anecdotal, the fragmentary, and the everyday placed in life narratives of the oppressed, and how does one narrate a life that has been dismissed and is not seen as "worthy" of commemoration or remembrance?

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The essays in this special issue are interested collectively in how and why circuits of production and available repertoires of representations of individual lives informed by caste reveal and veil intersections with other social categories such as gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, religion, and nation. For example, are women's life narratives different from men's, and what happens when they intersect with narrativizations of caste? Similarly, how does the narrativization of caste identities impact queer identities (as seen in Sumit Baudh's essay)? How are the politics of telling and not telling interwoven with gender, sexuality, and caste in life narratives? Some of the essays in this collection are also particularly keen to bring to the fore political deployments of the body through markers like touch, stigma, and performance (see, for example, the essays by Charu Gupta, Shailaja Paik, and Mukul Sharma). Life narratives, after all, can be seen as putting one's body on the page, the screen, and the stage, and thus evoking an aesthetic intimacy.

In general, the essays and indeed this project as a whole can be seen as continuing to struggle with notions of representation and representativeness. Through individual lives and their telling in various forms and genres, the collection explores how and why representation of caste in particular ways becomes a critical ground for identity formation and social positioning, both for "upper caste" individuals and for Dalits and Dalitbahujans or, in the context of Japan, Burakumin. These forms of representation of caste through life narratives not only reflect the hidden fears and desires of the individual and of the collective unconscious, not only make private feelings and images public, but also shape, image, and texture our lives in particular ways. Life narratives often represent dominant paradigms of caste, what Jacques Rancière calls "embodied allegories of inequality" (12). Caste can also be (mis) represented in different ways in biopics such as *Periyar*, *The Dirty Picture*, and *Bandit Queen*.[1] Social media, websites, and blogs can enable and distort representation of lives marked by caste. At the same time, representations may challenge caste in profound ways. Dalit life narratives, for example, often frame events and represent caste in distinct ways, challenging ideas of the "unrepresentable" and investing in an ethics of testimony. Different practices of representing caste lives thus throw open for us possibilities of challenging dominant embodiments, where representation is not just about replication but also about innovation.

As both representation and representativeness, a life narrative might be thought of as that which mediates between the *varna-jati* complex as a social category on the one hand and the individual (real) experiences of a life on the other. In this sense, the recourse to life narratives in a critical mode may be understood in multiple ways: as an attention to the experiences narrated; as

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an inquiry into genre; and as a mode of reading that attends particularly to protocols of the real and the authentic in a wide variety of texts that narrate lives. The collection does not attempt to adjudicate among these different and sometimes competing ways of deploying life narratives methodologically, preferring rather to let a profusion of approaches prevail.

Some of these approaches might be brought to bear in reading Rohith Vemula's death note as a devastating form of life narrative. Rohith Vemula was a politically active Dalit PhD scholar who committed suicide in January 2016 after being suspended from Hyderabad Central University. Much controversy has surrounded his life, his identity, and the reasons for his death.[2] Many lessons regarding caste lives can be drawn from this tragic episode. Vemula's note, with its unalloyed mix of idealism and despair, went viral on the Internet soon after his suicide and, in so doing, shook the national government for several weeks and brought unprecedented attention to the toxic mix of casteist prejudice and bureaucratic indifference that all too often greets vulnerable Dalit students like Vemula. Here is the note (reproduced verbatim, with repetitions, as reported in newspapers):

> Good morning,
>
> I would not be around when you read this letter. Don't get angry on me. I know some of you truly cared for me, loved me and treated me very well. I have no complaints on anyone. It was always with myself I had problems. I feel a growing gap between my soul and my body. And I have become a monster. I always wanted to be a writer. A writer of science, like Carl Sagan. At last, this is the only letter I am getting to write.
>
> I always wanted to be a writer. A writer of science, like Carl Sagan.
>
> I loved Science, Stars, Nature, but then I loved people without knowing that people have long since divorced from nature. Our feelings are second handed. Our love is constructed. Our beliefs colored. Our originality valid through artificial art. It has become truly difficult to love without getting hurt.
>
> The value of a man was reduced to his immediate identity and nearest possibility. To a vote. To a number. To a thing. Never was a man treated as a mind. As a glorious thing made up of star dust. In every field, in studies, in streets, in politics, and in dying and living.
>
> I am writing this kind of letter for the first time. My first time of a final letter. Forgive me if I fail to make sense.
>
> My birth is my fatal accident. I can never recover from my childhood loneliness. The unappreciated child from my past.
>
> May be I was wrong, all the while, in understanding world. In understanding love, pain, life, death. There was no urgency. But I always was rushing. Desperate to start a life. All the while, some people, for them, life itself is curse. My birth is my fatal accident. I can never recover from my childhood loneliness. The unappreciated child from my past.

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I am not hurt at this moment. I am not sad. I am just empty. Unconcerned about myself. That's pathetic. And that's why I am doing this.

People may dub me as a coward. And selfish, or stupid once I am gone. I am not bothered about what I am called. I don't believe in after-death stories, ghosts, or spirits. If there is anything at all I believe, I believe that I can travel to the stars. And know about the other worlds.

If you, who is reading this letter can do anything for me, I have to get 7 months of my fellowship, one lakh and seventy five thousand rupees. Please see to it that my family is paid that. I have to give some 40 thousand to Ramji. He never asked them back. But please pay that to him from that.

Let my funeral be silent and smooth. Behave like I just appeared and gone. Do not shed tears for me. Know that I am happy dead than being alive.

"From shadows to the stars."

Uma anna, sorry for using your room for this thing.

To ASA family, sorry for disappointing all of you. You loved me very much. I wish all the very best for the future.

For one last time,

Jai Bheem

I forgot to write the formalities. No one is responsible for my this act of killing myself.

No one has instigated me, whether by their acts or by their words to this act.

This is my decision and I am the only one responsible for this.

Do not trouble my friends and enemies on this after I am gone.

Is this not a representation of a life, that is, a life narrative, which also has a defining relationship with death? How does one "read" a life narrative such as this when the very act of reading might seem like a desecration of a life marked by vulnerability? At the same time—how does one *not* read such a life narrative? Wasn't Vemula precisely trying to get us to attend seriously to the issues that brought him to his difficult decision? Not reading seems equally a dishonoring of Vemula's life, activist spirit, and anguished cry from the heart. Vemula's death note marks an existential moment that acknowledges and yet refuses narrativization of caste. Not all life narratives engaging caste take as fraught a textual form as Vemula's final message, but his text serves as a good illustration of the real stakes and unique challenges posed to academic criticism and scholarship in reading such narratives.

In the crucial section XX of "Annihilation of Caste," Ambedkar makes a distinction between rules and principles in relationship to caste (also referred to in Y. S. Alone's essay), averring that the practice of caste depended on rule-based approaches that externally ordained behavior. In contrast, principles simply offered guidelines to behavior that could be tested. "Rules seek to tell an agent just what course of action to pursue," he notes. "Principles do not prescribe a specific course of action" (298). He is clear that the terrible

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discriminations of caste are a result of the blind allegiances (superstitions) that rules fostered.

Life narratives about caste represent the myriad manifestations in the lives of individuals (agents in Ambedkar's language) of such blind allegiances to rules. They give flesh and blood to the point that Ambedkar makes more abstractly, more theoretically. They show how the rules of caste are experienced and acceded to not only by Dalits but all agents within the *varna-jati* complex, or within the hierarchical social order of Japan, and also how these rules are challenged, bent, resisted, and contested. As made evident by the essays in this collection, life narratives constitute a crucial archive for the study and critique of caste structures in all their diversity.

NOTES

1. See Shankar's essay "Thugs and Bandits" on *Bandit Queen* in this regard.
2. For a recent newspaper article that tried to clear some of the controversy, see Mondal.

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SPEAKING SELF, WRITING CASTE
RECOVERING THE LIFE OF SANTRAM BA

CHARU GUPTA

Figure 1. Santram BA (1887–1988), reproduced courtesy of Madhu Chadha, granddaughter of Santram BA.

Santram BA,[1] who lived for 101 years (d. 1988), was a veteran Hindi writer and a radical caste social reformer from Punjab. He published more than one hundred books and booklets, including his autobiography, *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* (Experiences of My Life). A member of the Arya Samaj, he founded the Jat-Pat Torak Mandal (Organization to Break Caste, henceforth JPTM) in 1922. In spite of his vast writing repertoire, Santram has been marginalized in academic scholarship. His claim to fame has largely been that he invited B. R. Ambedkar to deliver the keynote address at the May 15, 1936, annual conference of the JPTM. However, the invitation was canceled because of internal opposition, which was convinced that Ambedkar's views would be unacceptable and controversial. The text of Ambedkar's lecture became the classic *Annihilation of Caste*.[2]

The covers of Santram BA's autobiography require close scrutiny and need to be studied on their own terms for several reasons. Belonging to the Shudra caste, unlike other pioneering caste radicals like Ambedkar or Periyar, Santram, while he trenchantly critiqued caste, perceived caste reform within the paradigm of Hinduism, accounting both for his limitations and possibilities. Santram's life narrative is significant not only because caste suffering forms an

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Figure 2. Cover of *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav*, 1974 edition.

axis of his life but also because there are other layers discernible, as he hedges the middle ground between Gandhi and Ambedkar, bourgeois and subaltern, Arya Samaj and Ad Dharm, and love and hate for Hinduism. It is from this in-between space that Santram produced his anticaste rhetoric. Santram's allure lies in his *trishanku* (limbo, middle-ground) status. While studying his writings, one passes through crossroads and by-lanes littered with caste, reminding us of the routes traversed and those not taken, and our inability to "classify" or confine him in any definite slot. While he may appear dated amid other caste radicals, his quests are pertinent, leaving behind a legacy, a memory, something that stirs the oppressed while also baffling us by its constraints.

When Santram wrote his autobiography in the 1960s, he already had his life mapped out in distinct phases, which he painted in broad brushstrokes. Vivid and playful, *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* was also a piece of propaganda for challenging caste. Various episodes in the autobiography were slanted to fit larger scripts, as Santram's personal narrative was informed by such elements as his Shudra status, Arya Samaj, Ambedkar, and JPTM. Santram starts the text by underlining his ordinariness, while emphasizing caste as central to his identity:

> I thought that writing one's autobiography was like flaunting one's greatness. . . . I am no extraordinary person. . . . My whole life I have just struggled against caste and served the Hindi language. But my friends stated that caste is the biggest enemy of India. To remove it is the biggest service to the nation. Your autobiography in a way would be a history of fighting against caste in modern India and of diffusion of Hindi in Punjab. . . . Thus I decided to write this book. . . . When anyone engages in social reform to get rid of caste, then not only strangers, even his own family and relatives oppose him. His photos are not published in papers. No statue of his is made. He has to burn on the pyre all his life. (3–6)[3]

M. S. S. Pandian argues that many Dalit texts "accentuate and underscore the self-conscious ordinariness of the lives narrated" (35) and the French philosopher Jacques Rancière states that "ordinary life has to be recognized not only as a possible subject for a poem but as a poetic subject par excellence" (175). Santram's autobiography represents such a framing with caste as its focus.

Through Santram's life and writings, this essay attempts to illuminate and rethink a social history of caste in early twentieth-century North India. It

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examines the stories he told others about himself, his life, and his anticaste thought. Santram's responses to caste provide glimpses of Santram the individual, the anticaste reformer and the family man, and interplay his personal, literary, and social life. His autobiography underlines everyday caste taboos around *roti-beti* (food and marriage), the constraints of Gandhian and Arya Samaj politics, and critically attacks Sanatani Hindu orthodoxy. It defies any neat readings, embodying paradoxical constitutions of the caste self, social reform, Hinduism, and nation, and effortlessly moves between private and public, personal and political, self and nation, individual and community, and intimate and social. This essay argues that Santram's thought cannot be bound by rubrics of glorification or demolition; rather, his perspective symbolizes how reformers were entangled between contradictory currents in colonial India. Santram produced multiple meanings and mutable positions on caste, where on the one hand, he became a staunch advocate of intercaste marriages, and on the other enacted a language of caste reform and respectability with ambiguous implications. Equally, Santram's writings signify conflicting uses of modernity, where he relied on reason on the one hand and devotion on the other to attack caste. It is this dual straddling and mixed congregation of ideas that make his life narrative both a complex and politicized form of resistance and critique of caste, while simultaneously appearing as an account of accepted caste models and messages. His life thus suggests new socialities of caste, whereby caste was both enabled and transformed.

The essay further registers caste through intimacy by focusing on Santram's attempts to subvert endogamy and upend conformity by promoting intercaste marriages. Anthony Giddens observes how "the possibility of intimacy means the promise of democracy" (188). And according to Alex Lubin, "intimate matters" are inextricably related to "civil rights activism in the public sphere" (xi). Intimacy is experienced in love and pleasure, and also expressed through relationships and representations, associations and exclusions. Santram, too, called upon ideas of intimacy to get at the terribly material, embodied character of caste-gender dynamics and its divergent receptions in public life. By challenging endogamy and caste hierarchies, he folded caste into histories of intimacy, love, and marriage, and drew intricate and inextricable connections between caste and gender. This helped shape a counter-narrative of caste, symbolized in the JPTM.

LIFE HISTORY AND CASTE: SELF AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

Rancière underlines that an individual life narrative "is not a choice of method within an alternative that would set the particular against the general, the individual against the collective, the short-term against the long-term, the

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small-scale against the large-scale, or the cultural against the economic. . . . It is a way of putting the alternative. . . . Its principle is to bring out the general in the particular, the century in the moment, the world in a bedroom" (171, 176–77). In the Indian context, David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn stress that life histories in India reveal "a formation of self-in-society that is more complex and subtle than a mutually exclusive opposition between an all-subsuming collectivity on the one hand, and a rampant individuality on the other" (19). More recently, Udaya Kumar has stressed that self-narratives from nineteenth-century India "rarely speak of private interiorities" and the distinctiveness of individual life is not their focal point; instead, they become a pretext for revealing something larger (*Writing the First Person* 13–14). Similarly, Richard Eaton deploys the genre of life narratives to enumerate a social history of the Deccan over four centuries.[4] It is in this context that Santram's autobiography, too, might be seen to reflect his ethical-political involvement, as the self is in constant dialogue with social and public interventions on caste, providing an archive of individual caste memory and collective caste history. Other scholars have emphasized that self-reflexive writing in the autobiographical mode has long been a part of Indian literary tradition (Ramaswamy 1), and that "a normative use of the model of the modern biographical subject in the west might obscure the long and discontinuous history of this form" in India (U. Kumar, "Writing the Life" 56). Read through these critical lenses, Santram's autobiography reveals divergent connotations seeking multiple purposes.

Autobiographies or life narratives have been the historical tool of the downtrodden, subalterns, and Dalits (Pandey 131–32), in which pain, suffering, and quotidian caste violence, combined with a language of personhood and collective rights, have often appeared as cultural capital (Ganguli 429–42; Hunt 176–208; R. Kumar 157–256; Pandey 131–93; Rege, 9–92). More recently, Laura Brueck has argued that the Hindi Dalit literary sphere signifies a "counterpublic," and a distinct political and aesthetic movement (50), and Toral Jatin Gajarawala has emphasized that "Dalit literature is the space where realism now lives" (3). In his classic work, Paul Gilroy underscores that black autobiography is "an act or process of simultaneous self-creation and self-emancipation" (69). Reiterates Pandian in a similar vein:

> Not bound by the evidentiary rules of social science, the privileged notion of teleological time, and claims to objectivity and authorial neutrality, these [Dalit] narrative forms can produce enabling re-descriptions of life-worlds and facilitate the re-imagination of the political. (35)

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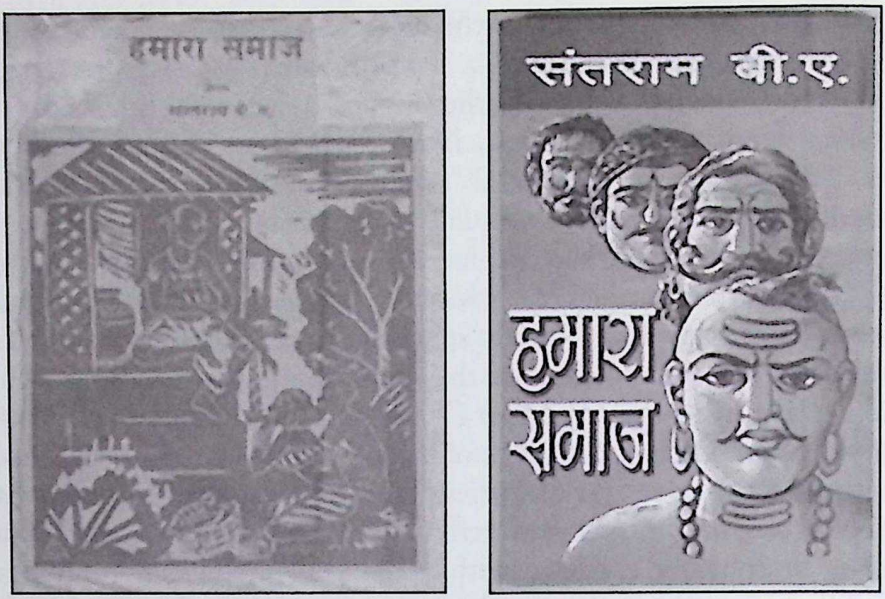

Figure 3. Covers of *Humara Samaj*, 1949 and 2007 editions. The 2007 cover is reproduced courtesy of Samyak Prakashan, Delhi.

Similar to many Dalit life narratives, caste provides the overarching framework of Santram's autobiography, as he imagines, constructs, and scripts memories of his subalternity. His autobiography becomes the landscape where divergent readings of stigmatization, suffering, contestation, and self-liberation come to be staged. When read in conjunction with *Humara Samaj* (Our Society), his most important book, Santram's autobiography highlights the centrality of caste in his life, while also bringing out the ambiguities of the times.

Both books have gone into several editions and are being published to this date, not by Arya Samaj but by Dalit publishing houses. Many of Santram's other books and booklets on caste have also found a fertile ground in Dalit publishing. Significantly, Satnam Singh, a leading Hindi Dalit writer, and Samyak Prakashan, a prominent Dalit publishing house, interpreted and published parts of *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* in 2008, adding a subtitle that boldly proclaimed the book to be the "first autobiography of Dalit literature."

Satnam Singh states:

> It is sad that Dalit literature too does not include him [Santram]. . . . Taking into account the year of its publication, *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* is the first [Hindi] Dalit autobiography. Santram was also a fearless journalist of his times. He wrote in all prominent newspapers-magazines. In 1914 he took out the magazine *Usha*. His *Kranti* was a famous magazine of its times. . . . In this context, he may be hailed as the first Hindi Dalit journalist as well. (*Santram BA* 3)[5]

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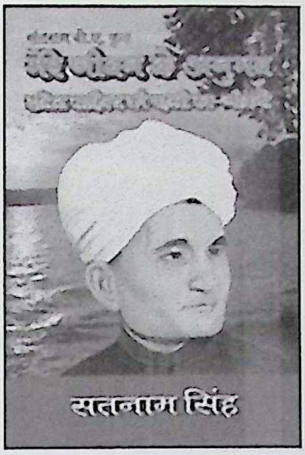

Figure 4. Cover of Satnam Singh's book, claiming Santram BA's *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* as the "First Autobiography of Dalit Literature." Reproduced courtesy of Samyak Prakashan, Delhi.

While Singh's claim may be disputed, it underscores the significance of Santram's autobiography, which operates on a register that overlaps with Dalit life testimonies. It is equally significant that Santram's name features in many Dalit anthologies and encyclopedia, underlining the profound heterogeneity of Dalit politics (Paswan and Jaideva 189–90; Kshirsagar 323–24). There has been a subversive drive among Dalits, as they have attempted to create genealogies of a long literary history of Dalit writing, which has sometimes encompassed a wider terrain of claiming the oppressed, pushing the boundaries of Dalit discourse. In his classic work, *Why I Am Not a Hindu*, Kancha Ilaiah shapes the word Dalitbahujan, whereby he articulates that in spite of contradictions "there are cultural and economic commonalities as well as commonalities of productive knowledge which mesh them [Other Backward Castes and Dalits] together like threads in a cloth" (ix). Similarly, Dalit Panthers cast their net wide and use the term Dalit in a generic, broad, and inclusive sense (Murugkar 237; Brueck 9; Shankar 67–74). This usage may account to an extent for the acceptance of Santram in Dalit anthologies.

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FAMILIAL AND SOCIAL ROOTS: CASTE DISCRIMINATION, ARYA SAMAJ, AND PROMOTION OF HINDI

Santram was born on February 14, 1887, in Rurani Basi, a small village in the Hoshiarpur district of Punjab. His father, named Ramdas Gohil, was a central Asian trader with business interests in Yarkand and Ladakh. His mother was Malini Devi. Santram was fourth among seven sons and one daughter (Santram, *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 5–6 and "Taunted" 2; Gopal 8). While economically his family had done well, Santram came from humble social roots, belonging to the Shilpkar *kumhar* (potter) caste, which came way below in the caste hierarchy, and had a Shudra status in Punjab. H. A. Rose draws on the work of Denzil Ibbetson, ethnographer par excellence of Punjab, to identify *kumhar* as

> the potter and brick-burner of the country. . . . He is a true village menial, receiving customary dues, in exchange for which he supplies all earthen vessels needed for household use. . . . He also, alone of all Punjab castes, keeps donkeys. . . . He is the petty carrier of the villages and towns. . . . His social standing is very low,

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> far below that of the Lohar and not very much above that of the Chamar; for his hereditary association with that impure beast the donkey, the animal sacred to Sitala, the small-pox goddess, pollutes him; as also his readiness to carry manure and sweepings. (562)

It was also noted in the *Gazetteer of the Hoshiarpur District, 1883–4*, "Donkeys are kept by the potters (*kumhar*), who do a good deal of the carrying trade between Palampur and Hoshiarpur" (107). Many degrading caste sayings pertain to *kumhars*, marking their Shudra status. Goes one:

> *kumhar ki gadhi, ghar-ghar ladi*
>
> (The donkey of the potter is used by the whole village) (Singh, *Santram BA* 13)

Other sayings reveal the poverty of the *kumhar*:

> *kumhar ke ghar baasan ka kaal!*
> *kumhar ke ghar chukke ka dukh!*
>
> (A scarcity of pots in the potter's house!
> A want of saucers in the potter's house!) (Fallon 144)

And goes yet another:

> *dheel dhoti baniya, ulta munch subir,*
> *bainda pair kumhar, ke teenu ke pehchaan.*
>
> (A trader wears a loose dhoti, the brave keep their mustaches turned up,
> and a potter is bare footed—this is the identity of the three.) (Singh 14)

Amid this background, Santram realized the importance of education very early. It has been pointed out how in colonial India, while untouchability and caste hierarchies were reproduced through educational institutions, the first generation of Dalit intellectuals increasingly saw education, knowledge, language, and print as central to their assertion (Auxiliary Committee 217-28; Ciotti 900; Constable 385). It has also been argued that print journalism helped nurture a Hindi Dalit counterpublic, boundaries of which were "located squarely in the interpretive framework of caste" (Brueck 50). Santram deployed these tools effectively in his critique of caste, as through his education, pen, and writing he literally made himself. He, too, like many other Dalits, viewed print and publishing as critical tools for claiming upward mobility and dignity (Satyanarayana and Tharu, *No Alphabet* and *Steel*). Santram studied in Bajwara, Ambala, Jullundur, and Lahore, acquiring his BA

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degree in 1909, and started writing actively in 1912 (Santram, *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 9; Singh 13). Since then, all his writings appeared without his caste nomenclature and Santram proudly displayed his educational qualification and degree as his surname, signature, and distinct identity—Santram BA—which became an integral part of his name (Gopal). Practices and politics of naming and renaming have been central to challenging stigmatized pasts (Paik 217–18; Pandey 207–10; Rao 205–13; U. Kumar, *Writing the First* 6). Santram gave his name distinct meanings by explicitly linking it to education.

It has been noted that Dalit autobiographies constantly recount experiences of humiliation, thereby making a "public claim regarding the norms that govern the treatment of each other in society" (U. Kumar, *Writing the First* 17). Santram's autobiographical memory, too, is infused with caste prejudices and attempts at carving out a life of dignity. He was harshly reminded of his Shudra status through some humiliating and bitter encounters in school and college, which form a vital part of how Santram represents himself in *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav*. He narrates:

> When I was admitted in class four in Ambala, my caste was also mentioned in the register. . . . My co-students constantly harassed me, calling me by my caste name *kumhar*. And why would they have not done so when even a saint and poet like Tulsidas ridiculed *kumhara*. . . . I took the students' taunts quietly and painfully. (16)

At another place he writes about his experience in college:

> In my boarding house, the kitchen in which I had food was orthodox. . . . One day a few fellow students . . . quarreled with me and kept a chit on my seat stating that since I belonged to a low-caste, I should have my food outside the kitchen, or else they would take the matter to the principal. . . . I angrily declared that forget the principal, even if they take the matter to the governor, I will have my food inside the kitchen only. (17–18)

Through such memories, Santram imaginatively weaves an "I" out of the contours of caste stigma. Santram's retelling encompasses everyday caste humiliation, myths of food and skin color, and a critique of caste intellectuals and scriptural Hindu texts, through which he shapes a multipronged critique of caste in private and public life.

Amid a contentious, casteist atmosphere, the teachings of Dayanand Saraswati and the spread of Arya Samaj in Punjab, which theoretically distanced itself from casteism (Jones 204), came to acquire a special attraction for Santram. Scholars have pointed out how many Dalits and "low castes"

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became followers of Arya Samaj, critically contributing to the creation of the first generation of Dalit intellectuals in Punjab (Juergensmeyer 72; Jones 309–10; Adcock, *Limits* 128). Many of the Ad Dharm activists, too, were initially associated with Arya Samaj (Juergensmeyer 27, 35–37; Ram 326). While in 1901 the Arya Samaj membership consisted overwhelmingly of Hindu "upper castes," by 1911 the Punjab membership had quadrupled through the entry of other castes. The census estimated that as many as two-thirds of the Arya Samajists of the region hailed from the "lowest castes" (*Census of India, 1911* 123–24).[6] Hoshiarpur particularly proved a fertile ground as it boasted of a large number of "untouchables," approximately 23 percent of the population (Juergensmeyer 72). Significantly, both Santram and Mangoo Ram, the dynamic leader of the Ad Dharm movement, hailed from Hoshiarpur. Mark Juergensmeyer points out that Arya Samaj's ideology became particularly popular among the urban Hindus of mercantile castes (38). Santram covered this median ground by belonging socially to the Shudra caste while being economically associated with the urban mercantile class. His attraction for the relatively progressive ideology and egalitarian principles of Arya Samaj has to be understood in this educational, urban, and social context, which also ultimately proved to be his drawback. At the same time, like many other "low castes," Santram selectively appropriated or rejected the ideological underpinnings and teachings of Arya Samaj to suit his objectives of social status and equality (Rawat 136–44; Adcock, *Limits* 159). He was a supporter of vegetarianism, *shuddhi* (reconversion through purification), and *brahmacharya* (celibacy), the last of which he slowly came to reject totally. Arya Samaj's ambiguity regarding caste on the ground to an extent indicates the inconsistencies within Santram, even when he was in constant conflict with his Arya Samaj "upper caste" fellows and lamented the various hurdles in his way.

Santram's love for Hindi developed in conjunction with the headway that Arya Samaj was making in Punjab. He narrates in *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav*:

> Hindi was taught in no school of Punjab. . . . I did not know any Nagari script till the third year of my college. In my adolescence I considered Persian to be the sweetest language, Iran to be the best paradise on earth, and Saadi, Omar Khayam and Firdausi the greatest poets. . . . However, Lahore and Arya Samaj changed my views dramatically. . . . Those days *Saddharma Pracharak*, the mouthpiece of Arya Samaj was published in Urdu. I used to read it with great enthusiasm. Its editor . . . Swami Shraddhanand announced a date from which the paper would switch over to Hindi. . . . To read the paper I started learning the Nagari script. . . . I left my love for Persian in favour of Hindi. (133–34)[7]

Santram was fluent in English and Urdu, and picked up Marathi and Gujarati from his second wife, Sunder Bai (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 109). His

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Hindi writings comprised a wide range of subjects and many translations, including of Alberuni and I-Tsing (142). Santram pitched himself as a promoter of Hindi language, creating a name for himself in the print-public life of the Hindi world, and was most influential via his books, pamphlets, and journals against caste.[8] He edited two monthly magazines, one in Urdu called *Kranti* and the other in Hindi entitled *Yugantar* to spread the message of JPTM, both of which ceased publication after the partition of India. Post independence, he was associated with *Vishwajyoti*, published from Hoshiarpur (136).

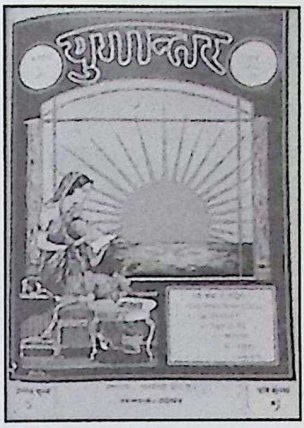

Figure 5. Cover of JPTM's magazine, *Yugantar*, published for four years, beginning January 1932.

In Santram's hands, immersed in the world of Hindi, print became a significant, if ambivalent, site for the transformation and contestation of caste. On the personal front, a series of calamities—the death of his first wife, Ganga Devi, in June 1924, and of his son Ved Vratt in May 1928—profoundly affected Santram's transition into early adulthood, which he describes painfully in *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav*.

After some years, his friend from JPTM, Bhumanand, persuaded Santram to enter into an intercaste marriage and with this marriage, Santram began a new phase of his life. Though Santram's extended family was well off, he constantly talked of his poverty and financial difficulties since he was uncompromising on his principles and never had a permanent job, nor was he ever satisfied with any jobs he did have (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 19, 32–33, 44–46).

In the rest of this essay, I take fragmentary examples from Santram's autobiography and other writings, parts of which are also a life narrative and history of JPTM, to underline how and why Santram attempted to create a hybrid liberal domain that traversed the middle ground between Gandhi and Ambedkar on the one hand and Arya Samaj and Ad Dharm on the other, the contradictory uses of modernity in Santram's critiques of caste, and his explorations of intimacy and intercaste marriages. These efforts highlight how Santram sometimes swam within the boundaries of Hinduism but more often went against its mainstream tide.

SELF AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF JPTM

Deeply impressed by a fiery speech delivered by Parmanand in Lahore in November 1922, Santram and a group of his friends formed JPTM, which Santram named. Eighteen people were initially associated with the organization,

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Figure 6. Left: Ganga Devi, first wife of Santram BA, died June 1924. Right: Ved Vratt, son of Santram BA, died May 1928, fourteen years old. Reproduced courtesy of Madhu Chadha, granddaughter of Santram BA.

including two women (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 184–85; *Jat-Pat* 1). Unlike other radical regional caste movements, JPTM was largely an urban-based movement among the literates.

Parmanand was JPTM's president in the beginning, but as its secretary, Santram was the driving force behind it. Articles were published on JPTM in newspapers, and the organization launched monthly journals like *Jat-Pat Torak*, *Kranti*, and *Yugantar*, with Santram as editor. JPTM also published many booklets against caste and distributed them free of cost. JPTM members also attended various Arya Samaj meetings and festivals, preaching against caste (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 185–87; *Jat-Pat* 2–3; Santram, *Caste Must Go* 1–2). JPTM's first priorities were to break the birth-based caste system and to promote intercaste marriages, focal points to which I will return later.

Scholars have highlighted that in colonial India, caste became a protean category for colonial capitalism, social reform, and Hindu nationalism, with the decennial census playing a central role in strengthening politicization of Hindu religion on the one hand and, on the other, "secularizing" and challenging configurations of caste (Banerjee-Dube xv–lxiv; Bayly 1–96, 144–86; Dirks 3–18; Cohn 224–54). In *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav*, Santram entwines a part of his life narrative with JPTM's movement in 1931 to remove the

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caste-based column from the census and from forms at colleges and universities. This activism made JPTM famous and accelerated its mobilization, as people from all the big cities of India started joining it (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 187–88; *Jat-Pat* 4–5; Santram, *Caste Must Go* 2; "Anti-Caste" 44; *Census of India, 1931* 395–96). It was noted in the 1931 census of Punjab:

> At the same time a tendency was noticeable for persons of low castes, well placed in life, to return no caste, and there had been a propaganda in this connection, particularly by the *Jat Pat Torak Mandal*. . . . Instructions . . . issued . . . were that "no caste return" should be recorded in cases in which the person enumerated had a genuine objection to the caste entry, having ceased to observe caste in his marital and inter-dining relations. (*Census of India, 1931* 325; Maheshwari 106–09)

Interestingly, Juergensmeyer considers the 1931 census and the campaign of Ad Dharm around it as its "crowning moment" when "everything came together" because the movement was successful in listing Ad Dharmis as a religious community, separate from Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus (72–80). Moreover, the movement exacerbated tensions between the Ad Dharm and the Arya Samaj. Santram's move in the 1931 census acquires significance amid this background.

JPTM and Santram, while close to the ideology of Arya Samaj, also had deep tensions with it and more so with the Ad Dharm movement. Santram lamented religious conversions, firmly supported *shuddhi*, and advocated vegetarianism. He framed his critique of caste by embracing the "lower castes" within a Hindu fold, and also attempted to "improve" some of the perceived characteristics and practices of the "lower castes." Yet, even in these arenas, he did not just replicate the teachings of Arya Samaj but often questioned and radically reinterpreted them, condemning and chastising their continued caste prejudices. For Santram, *shuddhi* did not so much symbolize a militant Hindu nationalism; rather, it was a way of assertion by the "lower castes" for radical caste reform (Adcock, "Brave" 261–86). As Lauren Berlant and Jay Prosser say: "Sometimes conventionality is a defense against norms too, a way to induce proximity without assimilation . . . and sometimes it's a way of creating another, counter conventional, space" (181). Some of the cartoons published in Santram's journal *Yugantar* transgressed normative discourses of caste. One 1933 cartoon in the journal shows a Brahmin male ogling a sweeper woman and, while desiring sex with her, categorically refusing to perform her *shuddhi*.

While Santram did express anxieties over religious conversions to Islam due to romance, love, and marriage, unlike many writings of Arya Samaj,

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Figure 7. Cartoon published in *Yugantar* in October 1933: "You are sensuous, titillating and intoxicating, look at me with a smile! Even if I carnally embrace you, I will still always be a Brahmin! However, no purification of yours can be conducted; dear you will always remain a sweeper woman" ("Uncouth Brahmin" 26).

there was no vociferous polemic in his writings against Muslims, *pirs*, or Islam. Santram appreciated the broadmindedness of Muslims in accepting such marriages within their fold and disparaged the narrowmindedness of Hindus in this regard (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 48–53). Even his attitude toward missionaries and Christianity appears soft. In fact, he drew selectively from Islam and Christianity to make his arguments. He dramatically wrote: "If I had been an untouchable, then to get rid of this slavery, I would have become a Muslim" (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 206). Critiquing Santram, a paper called *The Hindu* stated: "On reading Santram's articles, if his name is hidden, it appears that you are not reading a Hindu lover but a supporter of Miss [Katherine] Mayo" (qtd. in *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 212). Santram thus seems to represent a somewhat "syncretic" culture, drawing from varied religious idioms to build a case against caste. And yet his overall framework remained that of a Hindu ethos. Thus he argued that the Chuhras (sweepers) had two different religious traditions. One, under Muslim influence, took Lal Beg as its icon of worship, and the other recognized Maharishi Valmiki as the teacher of the Balmikis. The former had to be forgotten actively, he argued, while the latter had to be championed (*Humara* 124; Prashad 98–99). This distinction underlines the paradoxes in his positions.

Even while functioning within the paradigm of Hinduism, Santram's Shudra background and his radical stances against the *varnavyavastha* (caste system) and intercaste marriages faced stiff opposition both from the Hindu orthodoxy and the Arya Samaj. Even the progressive and iconic Hindi writer Nirala revealed his Brahmanical leanings in opposing Santram. In a long article titled "Varnashram-Dharm ki Vartman Stithi" (The Present State of *varanashramdharm*), Nirala expressed his deep sadness at Santram's formation of JPTM and scathingly criticized both intercaste marriage and interdining (836–43). Santram's inherent contradictions with Arya Samaj are even more illuminating, as his views brought him in direct conflict with the leading ideologues of Arya Samaj, and he remained socially marginal to the organization, excluded from established hierarchies of power. Santram eloquently

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demonstrates these conflicts by narrating an incident from his life when he was working as an agriculturist in Patti in 1914–16:

> Something occurred that created a huge furore against me in society. I ordered many texts from agricultural departments of countries like Australia, America, France and England to improve my yield. My wife Ganga Devi did not believe in pollution taboos from before and got food cooked from a Muslim woman. It came to my mind to manure my fields with bones of dead cattle lying around. I collected a huge heap of it on my land when my friend, the famous story writer Sudershan, came to visit me. He was at that time the editor of *Arya Gazette*, and when he chanced on the heap of bones he was extremely angry with me, stating that in spite of being an Arya Samajist, I was indulging in this sin. I argued with him stating . . . that these bones were of dead animals . . . and a rich source of manure. . . . But he did not listen. . . . He wrote a stinging statement against me in *Arya Gazette*. . . . Hindu press condemned me in strong terms . . . threatening to drag me to the court. . . . A deputation of residents of Patti questioned me. . . . I argued that if they had no objection to keeping their match boxes, which were prepared from phosphorous, the essence of bones, inside their sacred kitchen, they should not oppose me providing manure to my lands. (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 38–40)[9]

Many such incidents occupy the pages of *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav*, where Santram underlines that while JPTM was categorically against *varnavyavastha*, it was a sacred doctrine for the Arya Samaj (Santram, "Taunted" 2). The constant negotiations and tensions reached a breaking point, whereby Santram finally dissociated from Arya Samaj (Juergensmeyer 38–39), and was drawn to Buddhist ascetic traditions (Singh 3). His autobiography thus often invokes narratives associated with Dalit movements. And yet, unlike Mangoo Ram or Ambedkar, Santram could never bring himself to move away from a Hindu paradigm and often enacted a language of caste respectability with ambiguous implications.

His relationship with Dalit organizations and leaders appears equally troubling, and he did not fit into Dalit movements of the time. While repudiating caste in no uncertain terms and being a staunch advocate of intercaste marriages, he could not become a champion of the Dalit cause like Mangoo Ram. In fact, he never acknowledged the existence of the vibrant Ad Dharm movement though both he and Mangoo Ram hailed from Hoshiarpur and their periods considerably overlapped. Juergensmeyer states that the JPTM "was not a model for the Ad Dharm, since its urban, reform Hindu, intercaste composition was quite different from what the Ad Dharm would embrace" (39). It may also be argued that JPTM, like the Arya Samaj, was worried about the increasing assertiveness of the Ad Dharm movement and hoped to blunt its edge by absorbing Dalits within its fold and into a pan-Hindu

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identity. Significantly, Santram also led a strike of sweepers in Jullundar in 1938 (Kshirsagar 323). Both Mangoo Ram and Santram drew partial inspiration from Arya Samaj, but both found its ideology restricting, rebelling against it in different ways—Santram from within, and Mangoo Ram from without. The choices that Santram makes in his autobiography, where his tensions with Arya Samaj are repeatedly stressed while erasing and silencing Ad Dharm, underscores his median positionality.

Equally, Santram walked the line between Gandhi and Ambedkar, not fully opposing the "disturbing faults" of Gaṇdhi, particularly his leanings toward Sanatani Hinduism, nor fully supporting the "superior merits"of Ambedkar, particularly regarding conversion. Santram's telling of his life not only contributes to the Gandhi-Ambedkar debate on caste but, by falling between their grids, signifies a third stance. He was uncomfortable with and for both of them, even though he appears closer to Ambedkar. Santram had some sharp exchanges with Gandhi. He narrates an interesting incident in an interview:

> I led a deputation of the JPTM to Gandhi at Lahore and requested him to help our movement. But the Mahatma said that caste was a good thing as it eliminated hard competition in the choice of profession. . . . At this I replied—"Mahatmaji, it is a good thing for a Brahman, or Kshatriya, or Vaishya boy to follow the profession of his father, but how can it be in the interest of a sweeper boy to continue to remove night soil and clean latrines for generations? Mahatmaji, you are a Bania by caste; your hereditary profession was to sell salt, oil and flour. Why don't you go and earn your living by selling those commodities? Why have you come here to preach politics and ethics?" At this there was laughter in which his wife and Seth Lal Bajaj also joined. (Manchanda 18–19)

Santram was in dialogue with both Periyar and Ambedkar, finding affinities with them. He published an article on Periyar in *Viduthalai*, the leading Tamil daily, in June 1953 (Santram, "Individual"; Manchanda 6). However, he appeared to be closer to Ambedkar, toward whom he often expressed great admiration rather than any overt criticism, and yet he was troubled by him, which is reflected in the cancellation of the JPTM Conference to which Ambedkar was invited. Many members of JPTM, on reading the text of Ambedkar's speech, found it too hot to handle, especially his direct, scathing attack on Hinduism and support of conversion. Though never directly stated, Santram seems to be in implicit agreement with some of the objections, though he continued to remain Ambedkar's personal friend (Santram, "Taunted" 7). In an exchange between Santram and Ambedkar, the latter wrote:

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> I admire your efforts for breaking up the caste system. But allow me to say that I do not agree with the way you are attacking the problem. I do not see how you can break up caste without annihilating the religious notions on which the caste system is founded. I cannot develop the argument now. . . . In the meantime I must leave it to you to deal with the question in the way you like. (Ambedkar, "'Religious Notions'")

Significantly, Santram went on to translate *Annihilation of Caste* into Hindi and published it under the banner of JPTM (*Jatibhed*). He also published it in Urdu in his journal *Kranti* (Kshirsagar 323). The persistent problem with Santram remained his continuous reliance on Hindu idioms and on "upper castes" even in the realm of intercaste marriages. Yet, today, Santram's writings find greater acceptance from Dalits than among liberal Arya Samajis, even when his larger history is almost forgotten. Santram was no Mangoo Ram or Ambedkar; yet what he had to say about his life and his times tells us much about modern histories of caste. He signified a liberal premise and a middle ground and ethos, at times bound by his contexts and at others envisioning ahead of his time. His stances on intercaste marriages offer the most lasting legacy for anticaste politics, while also bringing forth his contradictory uses of sacred and secular, devotion and modernity, to which I finally turn.

TRANSGRESSIVE INTIMACIES: INTERCASTE MARRIAGES, SANTRAM, AND JPTM

> *prem na dekhe jat-kujat.*
> *bhookh na dekhe jutha bhaat.*
>
> (Love does not see any caste boundaries.
> Hunger is indifferent to food taboos.) (Santram, *Antarjatiya* 31)

Roti-beti (food-marriage) taboos have been central to caste practices of spatial and bodily exclusions. Endogamy, a cornerstone of caste, also reveals the pervasive imprint of caste on women's bodies. Even while operating within heteronormative paradigms, intercaste marriages have produced daily policing and everyday violence, along the lines of what Foucault calls the alliance model of sexuality, where—through arrangement of marriages—relations and boundaries of caste and religion are policed (106–11). Increasing anxieties and fears around Dalit conversions forced Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha to support intercaste marriages at a rhetorical level,[10] but on the ground there were fraught debates and uneasiness on the question, as most reformers underwrote an exclusive grammar of difference in sexual regimes (Gupta 77–84). Significantly, Ambedkar argued that intercaste marriage was

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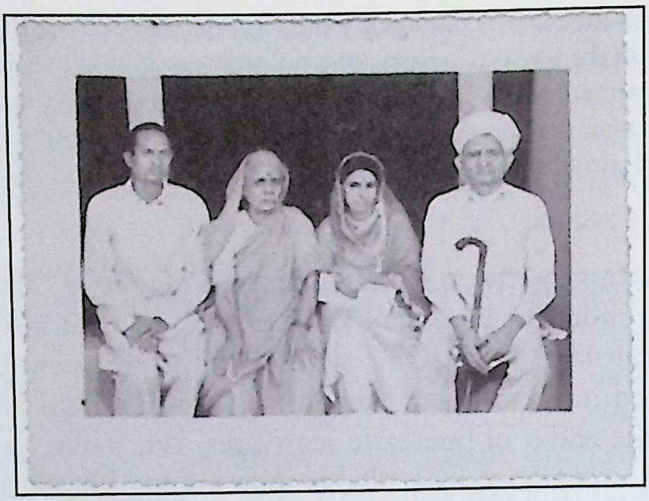

Figure 8. Intercaste marriage performed by JPTM between Vijay Kumar MA (Vaishya) and Chand Rani BA (Brahmin). Santram on extreme right. Reproduced courtesy of Madhu Chadha, granddaughter of Santram BA.

the hallmark of Dalit progress and the most important solution to annihilating caste, since it challenged the relationship between maintenance of caste purity and control of women's sexuality (*Annihilation* 59–64; Rao 232–33).

Santram made a categorical intervention in this arena by bringing together caste, gender, sexuality, and desire in his discourse on intercaste marriages, making it a vehicle of his anticaste articulations. While hailing the arrival of JPTM under the leadership of Santram, the editor of *Indian Social Reformer* highlighted the limitations of reform movements like Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj:

> But very little has been done by the Arya Samaj and other bodies to break the citadel of caste system by the arrangement of inter-caste-dinners, inter-caste-marriages. . . . These movements, instead of coming forward boldly and frankly to champion the cause of social reforms, have become part and parcel of the orthodox retrogressive Hinduism. . . . It is with this object of infusing a new spirit that JPTM has been started recently. ("League" 320)

The first and foremost rule of JPTM was to break the birth-based caste system and to promote intercaste marriages. It was this central theme that propelled Santram's critique of caste and JPTM's activities. JPTM's rules stated that the only Hindus who could join the organization were those who pledged not to marry within their caste, and if married, promised the same for their children. There was a separate department of JPTM to promote intercaste

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marriages, which maintained "a register in which all eligible candidates for intercaste marriage" were entered (*Jat-Pat* 4; Santram, *Caste Must Go* 2). A list of such marriages was published in JPTM's booklet *Madhur Veena* and in the 1929 directory of JPTM (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 188; "Jat" 550). A review of the activities of the Mandal in 1939 stated that "at the least computation such marriages must be 500 in number" (*Jat-Pat* 4). JPTM had a limited, largely urban-based membership and following, but it cut across regions and functioned with intercaste marriages as its central paradigm. In his writings, including his autobiography, Santram gives many examples of intercaste marriages that he and the JPTM promoted and facilitated.

However, it appears that most of these intercaste marriages pertained to the top three *varnas*, the "twice-born" castes. Rather than vertical, it was horizontal alliances between the top three *varnas* that were more often encouraged in the name of intercaste marriages. For example, Santram describes an incident in 1914:

> I had two friends Parmanand and Bhumanand. Parmanand was Arora by caste and Bhumanand a Brahmin. . . . Parmanand requested me to persuade Bhumanand to marry his younger sister. . . . Bhumanand agreed. . . . His father, family and friends opposed it and no one came for the wedding. . . . It was a brave act to break caste taboos at that time. (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 36)[11]

Santram often faced threats for facilitating such marriages (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 56–59). Largely due to his efforts, intercaste marriages became a symbol of progressive urban modernity, operating through JPTM mainly among a small circle of elites. It was a sincere effort to break caste, but it often provided a view from top down, and a perspective from above, revealing both Santram's limitations and possibilities. Yet, it is to be noted that after the death of his first wife, Santram himself remarried a Maharashtrian Brahmin virgin widow Sunder Bai Pradhan in December 1929.

This was an interprovincial widow remarriage. It was also an intercaste *pratiloma* marriage—most attacked by the orthodoxy—between a Shudra man and a Brahmin widow, similar to Ambedkar's second marriage. In a sense, the central focus of intercaste marriages allowed Santram to underline how caste permeated our most intimate spaces, and to show that it was in such arenas that caste needed to be challenged the most.

Considering caste to be a disease, Santram said that it rested on the four taboos of touch, occupation, food, and marriage (*Humara* 3). Relentlessly questioning Manu[12] and endorsing Ambedkar, he passionately promoted intercaste, interregional, and interreligious marriages as central to the

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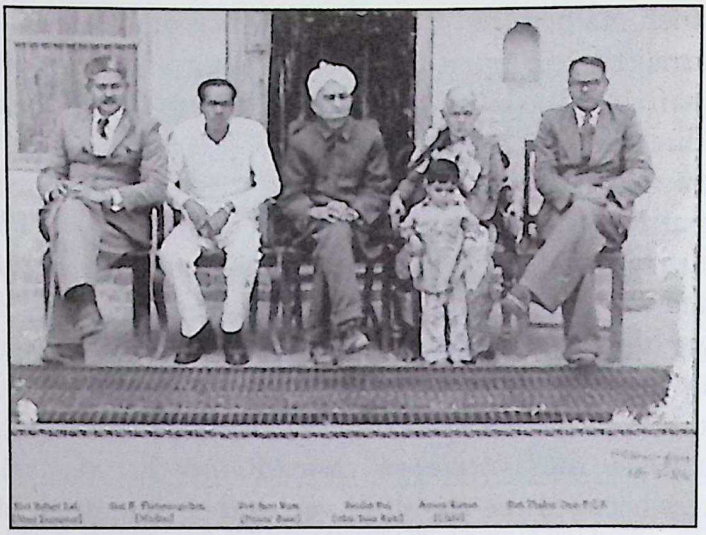

Figure 9. Santram BA (in center) with his second wife Sunder Bai. Reproduced courtesy of Madhu Chadha, granddaughter of Santram BA.

eradication of caste. He offered multipronged arguments to disrupt the logi of endogamy, resorting to sacred, religious, devotional, and scriptural dis courses on the one hand and relying on social, secular, modern, scientific, an rationalist arguments on the other. Selectively quoting from ancient texts, h constantly reiterated past examples of *anuloma* and *pratiloma* intercaste mar riages. For example, Pramatta, a Brahmin woman, married a barber and gav birth to Matang, the great *rishi*. Arundhati, a Kshatriya, was married to Vash ishth Rishi, son of a prostitute. Their son Shakti married Adrishyanti, a Chan dal girl. Shakti's son, Parashar, the great *rishi*, married Satyavati, a fisherman daughter, and was father of Vyas, the writer of Mahabharat. Bhim married th demoness Hidamba, and Ghatotkatch was their child (*Humara* 11–14). San tram included in his list leading personalities like Gandhi, Paramanand, Ne hru, Gokul Chand, and Raja Narendra Nath, who themselves had intercaste interregional marriages, saying that none of them could be excommunicated from Hindu society ("Hindu Rishis" 6).

From here he easily moved to modern, scientific, and "secular" argu ments, intermeshing them with equality and justice. Paul Gilroy talks of th African American autobiographer Frederick Douglass, who brought "the il lumination of reason to the ethical darkness of slavery" (59). In India, th anticaste thinker Periyar passionately invoked radical empiricism and a verifi able view of science (Geetha and Rajadurai 514). In a similar vein, Santram used enlightened modern discourses and rationality to counter caste. San tram wondered, "Why such Hindu kings like Ramchandra, Harishchandra,

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Krishna, Shivaji and Pratap did not think of . . . providing education and full citizenship rights to untouchables and Shudras?" At another place he stated, "Attempting to take help of *shastras* in finding solutions to eradicate caste and untouchability is like washing dirt with more dirt" (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 222). Santram adapted a Western liberal model to a distinctly Indian register, which helped him in molding a new caste self. Santram often resorted to quoting from scholars like the German American anthropologist Franz Boas, a prominent opponent of ideologies of scientific racism, to support his arguments (*Humara* 124). Further, similar to many Dalit narratives, Santram selectively praised the British rule: "For many untouchables and Shudras, the British rule is an unmatched God's gift. . . . Untouchables will be very foolish to prefer a Hindu-dominated state over the British rule" (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 208).

Replete with discussions of "difference" and "sameness" and its varied connotations, Santram interrogated notions of homogeneity, oneness, self-sufficiency, self-knowledge, singular identity, and binarity, and stressed the advantages of what he called "crossbreeding," which, he argued, led to the birth of a stronger and more creative third. He stated,

> It is a universal principle of science that the mixing and coming together of two different products leads to a better and nicer third. Thus oxygen and hydrogen, when combined, produce the best and the purest product of water. . . . When horses and donkeys cross breed, the khachar is born, more powerful and stronger than the two. . . . Similarly inter-caste marriages lead to better relationships, more equitable society, and stronger nation. (*Antarjatiya* 1–2)

Santram argued that endogamy was an inferior form of marriage and even equated it with incest—a marriage between brothers and sisters. Simultaneously, he stressed that the coming together of the intellect and brain of the Brahmin and the physical strength of the Kshatriya would lead to a better progeny. Within Santram's arguments, however, also lay their limitations, domestications, and occlusions, as he sometimes recast stereotypical and essentialist perceptions pertaining to the "characteristics" of different *varnas*, as noted in the previous sentence. He appropriated ideas around national growth, development, progress, masculinity, and particularly eugenics to push for intercaste marriages, with dubious and double-edged implications. Lack of masculine power, weakness, lower levels of intelligence, constant defeats of Hindus in past wars, unhealthy progeny, weak nation—all were depicted as evils of endogamy. Inversely, he stressed, intercaste marriages ensured stronger, healthier, and brighter children; diversified occupational categories; increased masculine strength; and were central to Hindu progress (*Antarjatiya*

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5–15). Visions of selfhood, equality, progress, freedom, modernity, and rationality were imparted in Santram's narrative in conjunction with Hindu religious, traditional, and ritualistic paradigms, revealing an argumentative pendulum swinging between the spiritual and the material.

Santram undercut caste power through his arguments, at times inadvertently reiterating stereotypes. Once at the annual conference of Arya Samaj, Lahore, there was a debate between Santram and Ramdev, a teacher at Gurukul Kangri, on *varnavyavastha*, with the latter supporting it and Santram vehemently opposing it. Santram stated in a light vein:

> You people say that people should be branded with their *varna* label, and men-women with same label should marry. . . . Now suppose the husband and wife are of the same *varna*, and have similar characteristics—both get easily angry, and tend to fight. Their qualities are the same. In such a home, there will be constant arguments and fights. As opposed to this, suppose one of them is calm and quiet, then there are much fewer chances of their family life breaking. . . . Similarly, marriage in same *varna* is not good. (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 199–201)

The language of disparaging binaries and boundaries could implicitly reinstate them. In an article published in the famous magazine *Sudha*, Santram replied to various objections leveled against intercaste marriages and contended that one Amritlal Rai had said that these would lead to clandestine sexual relations, romance, and elopement with women, domestic servants, or "low caste" men. Santram replied, albeit in a patronizing tone, that even the *dasi* could be beautiful, talented, and virtuous and that there were many fair and attractive Chamar women. He went on to disdain the argument that such alliances would greatly lower the ideal of women's purity and honor ("Antarjatiya" 596–608). At the same time, he challenged not only caste hierarchies but also patriarchal hegemonies through his accounts of intercaste marriages. He stressed that due to practices of endogamy, in *jatis* where women outnumbered men, there had been a phenomenal growth of dowry, whereas where it was the inverse, where men outnumbered women, the latter were sold as commodities and sex trade proliferated (*Antarjatiya* 17). He attacked the policing of women's desires whereby women laughing loudly or going out at night were viewed with suspicion, and he blamed the Ramayan for preaching false notions of women's purity (*Humara* 97–100). Questioning that exclusive endogamous marriage could in any way be regarded as more positive, stabler, or better than intercaste marriage, he underlined that intercaste marriages were more robust, rich, and meaningful.

On the side, it is to be noted that Santram also proved ahead of his times on questions of sex and gender. While initially believing in *brahmacharya*, he

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soon gave up the idea, arguing that it caused more harm than benefit (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 84–85). He became deeply influenced by Marie Stopes, exchanged letters with her, and translated some of her writings. For example, Santram translated her book *Married Love* as *Vivahit Prem* in 1925[13]—and penned a treatise on sex and sexual pleasure titled *Rativilas* (Tandon 307). In an article written in the magazine *Madhuri* in 1924, Santram argued that intricacies of sex and erotic life of the conjugal couple needed to be discussed explicitly. He went on to support the "true" publications on sexual science, which was also publicity material for sex manuals ("Rati" 601–05). Santram was also an advocate for birth control, a belief that Periyar may also have influenced.[14] For example, Santram translated the English book *Contraception* into Hindi in 1926, calling it *Dampati Mitra* (Friend of Married Couple). The book contained various methods of birth control and gave agency regarding reproductive rights largely to women (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 161). Santram wrote:

> Some people severely criticized the book, calling it obscene and threatened me with a court case. . . . But several thanked me for publishing it. . . . The publisher . . . told me that wives of many Arya Samajis, who had criticized the book, had secretly bought it and read it with great enthusiasm. (*Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* 161–62)[16]

In these writings, too, Santram straddled multiple terrains, as on the one hand he drew from classical works on *kamshastra* (sexual science), referring to them as beneficial, and on the other relied on Western sexologists and eugenic arguments to underscore pleasure and desire as important facets of modern sexual life. Lauren Berlant argues:

> Central to the development of narratives that link personal life to larger histories, and to practices and institutions of intimacy, desire also measures fields of difference and distance. It both constructs and collapses distinctions between public and private: it reorganizes worlds. (13–14)

Santram's insights and narratives on marriage, sex, and pleasure not only conjoin the private and public, they open up an interesting ancillary terrain of textures of touch, sexuality, and intercaste registers of desire, intimacy, and transgressive sexual norms.

Santram thus seems to occupy paradoxical social sites—appropriating caste as a sign of privilege in some cases while disparaging it in others. He simultaneously moved on two registers to support intercaste marriages—the first one invoked a scriptural, theological, and ritualistic language, while the second was anchored in arguments of modernity, eugenics, nation, equality, and egalitarianism. This deft combination of hybrid means, whereby through

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various modes of articulation he described spaces and possibilities of intercaste marriages, had ambiguous implications. On the one hand, he opposed essentialized characteristics of different *varnas* and of women, and on the other his language of healthy progeny, of difference, of powerful nation had a potential to reinstate caste and patriarchy. But then, woven alongside was also the belief that children of intercaste unions not only inherited the qualities of both parents but also did not belong to one or another of the constructed caste categories and instead occupied a third, liminal space. While gendering intercaste marriages, he on the one hand upheld ideologies of productive and reproductive labor, and on the other, inherent in his arguments was also a plea to refigure relationships between women and men. Herein lay Santram's paradox: he used a version of the poison as its own remedy. At the same time, the disruption of endogamous marriages signified a challenge to caste difference and a transgressive space of intimate desires.

CONCLUSION

Santram's autobiography and other writings are not merely literary ornaments; they are communicative acts through which he evolves his own anticaste idioms, codes, and practices. Infused with Santram's agency, *Mere Jeevan ke Anubhav* is not just about an individual but carries within it varied, uneasy, and aching caste attitudes of the era. Santram's life and writing act as an archive of anticaste thought in a particular context, becoming a site and repository of the social history of caste in modern India. His narrative offers a richly textured account of his private life and public commitments, whereby his anticaste tropes endeavor to reach a hybrid, liberal ground, jostling between Gandhi and Ambedkar, and between Arya Samaj and Ad Dharm, a process fraught with fissures. Individual, private life and collective, public histories coexist in his narrative, as both are caste marked. Santram's life and writings cannot be easily slotted as they ride on uncertainties with a deep hankering to get rid of caste without letting go of Hinduism. He navigated sacred and secular, devotional and modern discourses and brought the theological and the social together to refute caste, inescapably representing multiple and diverse subjectivities, which were often discordant with each other. In spite of his deep frustration with the Arya Samaj, he attempted to amalgamate Arya Samaji and anticaste ideas. Santram deployed social reform through largely urban, educated, "upper caste" characters, whereby terms of Hinduism were subtly reworked and reinstated. At the same time, Santram constantly negotiated with a contentious associational discourse around caste, which permeated his personal and social life, endeavoring to "unread" its dominant inscriptions.

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Santram's writings also contribute to creating a counterarchive of caste, as he selectively took on the language of Arya Samaj, Ambedkar, and intercaste marriages. Recalcitrant histories of caste may be gleaned by studying Santram's life narrative. His vernacular articulations are often rooted in a cross-referential counterarchive, which is in dialogue with other hegemonic texts, and produces a history of anticasteism through a hybrid liberal paradigm. These enunciations open Santram's life to subversive appropriations and emancipatory practices of caste dissent. It is perhaps for this reason that Dalit writers and intellectuals have claimed Santram more than members of the Arya Samaj. His dual identification as a Shudra and a Dalit at one and the same time, as within and outside Arya Samaj, produces a radical edge to Santram's life. Similar to Phule, Periyar, and Ambedkar, his trenchant critique of endogamy provides the intersection between anticaste thought and gender, challenging connections between sexual regulation and caste reproduction. Santram's erudite enunciations in support of intercaste marriages call upon ideas of caste intimacy as a way to get at the terribly material, embodied character of caste and gender dynamics and as a way of breaking the shackles of the *varna-jati* complex. However, since it was annihilation of caste rather than sexual freedom per se that was Santram's focus, there was an instability in the otherwise radical connections he drew. It is important to resurrect the circumscribed life of this half-forgotten caste reformer, which is laden with radical possibilities.

NOTES

1. Santram used his attainment of a baccalaureate degree as a kind of honorific.
2. See Ambedkar's preface for more information (i–viii).
3. All translations from Hindi are mine, unless otherwise stated.
4. See also Karlekar.
5. Reiterated also in personal interview with Satnam Singh.
6. The trend continued in 1921 (see *Census of India, 1921* 181).
7. Reiterated in his interview (Manchanda 1).
8. Many of these texts have been republished by Samyak Prakashan, Delhi.
9. *Arya Gazette* was an organ of the Arya Samaj.
10. For example, in its seventeenth session in Poona in 1935, the Hindu Mahasabha resolved "in favour of complete liberty of inter-marriage between all sections of the Hindu community," including with Harijans.
11. Also mentioned in Manchanda (4).
12. Once, while critiquing Manu, Santram was asked by a learned scholar if he was more knowledgeable than Manu. At this Santram replied, "Yes! Manu did not know what is meant by 'telepathy', what is a 'telescope', how did a rail run, while I know about all

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these things. If Manu was something, he may have been in his times. At present ou knowledge is much greater." See Manchanda (8).

13. Also mentioned in a Catalogue of Books for the new year of a publisher, *Naye Varsh* (44
14. For a discussion on the larger politics of birth control in colonial India, see Ahluwali On Periyar and birth control, see Hodges; Anandhi (39–66).
15. Santram also wrote another book on birth control called *Santan Sankhya ka Seem Bandhan* (Control of Number of Children). I have not been able to locate the book, bu it is mentioned in a Catalogue of Books, *Naye Varsh*.

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THE DALIT PERSONAL NARRATIVE IN HINDI
REFLECTIONS ON A LONG LITERARY LINEAGE

TAPAN BASU

Day in and day out, this Manusmriti is burning us, burning us,
Not letting us climb up, it is degrading us, degrading us,
While Brahmins and Kshatriyas are allowed to rise and rise,
"Wear your old clothes," for us is the advice.
No wealth can we earn, what we save is not secure,
Sheer depression is our lot, since we are always dubbed impure.
Lower in stature than dogs or cats or flies,
Provided no habitation under the village skies,
We labour like bullocks, with no returns to await,
Just abuses and thrashings are our fate.
Our toils are enforced, not even food as recompense,
Our children wail with hunger, their torture makes no sense.
O listen, o Hindus, on you only misfortunes will descend
For shedding the tears of innocents, and for their suffering without end!
—Swami Achhutanand Harihar, "Manusmriti Is Burning Us"[1]

Swami Achhutanand Harihar's poem, "Manusmriti Is Burning Us," which was written sometime between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is no doubt one of the earliest statements, in Hindi, made by a member of the so-called "untouchable" castes of Hinduism against Hinduism's *varna*-based social order. But what is remarkable about the composition is that, apart from its sharp critique of the exploitation and the oppressiveness inherent in the birth-determined caste system, it is also an articulation of a radical self-consciousness on the part of a caste subject who belongs to the most downtrodden ranks of India's Hindu population. In fact Achhutanand deployed the term "Dalit" as a signifier of the outcaste communities' politicized and oppositional self-awareness long before it became current in other regions of India like Maharashtra, where it was popularized, decades later, by anticaste

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organizations such as the Dalit Panthers. Thus, in one of his better-known verses, "How Long Will the Dalit Lie Dormant?" Achhutanand writes,

> Manusmriti's inhuman laws will cease to affright
> Once the Dalit, the deprived, the outcaste arise and unite. (qtd. in Singh 73)

Achhutanand's writings, in verse as well as in prose, habitually refer to the "undercastes" as a collective entity whose sorry plight he attempts to record through stirring narratives of resistance. Although he is often credited with being the first published Dalit writer from the Hindi belt, it is now acknowledged that he was by no means the only one of his times to print accounts of the sufferings of the "untouchables."

What could be designated as a Dalit print culture was indeed rather vibrant in North India in the early decades of the twentieth century and was the vehicle for members of the "untouchable" castes to reach out to a growing number of literate caste fellows in this region. As Badri Narayan and A. R. Misra have pointed out, this was not quite a negligible constituency—"the number of untouchables successful in obtaining education in the United Provinces alone was 46,000 in the year 1917" (16).

The earliest known example of a text authored by an "untouchable" to appear in print was a poem that Hira Dom composed in 1914. It was entitled "Achut Ki Shikayat" and repudiates the servitude traditionally expected from "untouchables" by members of the "upper castes"—the Brahmins, the Thakurs, the Banias, the Ahirs, or the Bhats. The poem is a staunch assertion of "lower caste" self-reliance and solidarity, and includes the following lines:

> We shall earn by the labour of our sweat,
> And eat with the members of our family
> distributing whatever there is.
> [. . .]
> They fear to even touch us as we are doms. (Narayan and Misra 16)

As the title—translated in English as "The Complaint of an Untouchable"—attests, the poem is a personal narrative in verse, as is Swami Achhutanand Harihar's poem, "Manusmriti Is Burning Us." But more important is the fact that both poems are narratives about the self—couched all along in the first-person plural voice. The predicaments referred to are as much shared as they are individual. The "we" in either poem claims representational capacity and also an implied addressee of fellow sufferers, all victims of stringent caste laws. Sharmila Rege's theorization of Dalit personal narratives as "testimonios," writings "which forge a right to speak both for and beyond the

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individual, and contest, explicitly or implicitly, the 'official forgetting' of his tories of caste oppression, struggles and resistance," applies as much to thes narratives as to the contemporary Dalit women's narratives which she ha translated (11–13).[2] The testimonial element in some of the earliest Dalit po ems in Hindi by Dalits, cited above, is indicative of the existence of a read ing public, however small, whose constituents possess a common experienc of being with the writers on the receiving end of the precepts and practices o untouchability. My focus in this essay will be on the emergent genre of th Dalit personal narrative in Hindi, which began to make itself more and mor visible in North India during the last two decades of the twentieth century These narratives are legatees of the Achhutanand tradition of anticaste writ ing that took shape as early as the earliest decades of the twentieth century.

Swami Achhutanand was a prolific writer. But there is no doubt that i was the assurance of an empathetic reading public that prompted him to tak to the pen and initiate the publication of the newspaper *Achhut* in 1917. Bor Hiralal on May 6, 1879, in the Mainpuri district of the United Provinces Achhutanand, like B. R. Ambedkar, was the son of a father with a job in th British army and was thus able to attend school, unlike many children of hi caste of leather workers, the Chamars. Achhutanand's performance at schoo was exceedingly creditable, and by the age of fourteen he had mastered fou languages: Hindi, Urdu, Gurmukhi, and English. During his teens, he cam into contact with some peripatetic sannyasis and with them toured several pil grimage spots across India. Thus he became close to the Arya Samaj, which in those days, was purposefully wooing members of the "lower castes" so a to prevent them from falling prey to the seductions of conversion to other re ligions. But Achhutanand's involvement with the Arya Samaj, despite his at tainment of key positions within its administrative structure, was short lived His interrogative mind saw through its complicity with traditional Hindu beliefs. He declared the Arya Samaj to be a

> trickery of the Vedic religion weaved to save the Brahmanical religion from attacks by the Christians and Muslims. Its philosophy is hypocritical and principles lop-sided. Its purification programme is mere deception and the talk of varna system based on action and quality is a mere jugglery of words. It is an enemy of history, murderer of truth and adept in useless and alluring gossips. Its perception is faulty, speech illogical, establishment empty and discourses on Vedas purely manipulated. What it says it does not do. Its aim is to declare enmity with Muslims and Christians, enslave the Hindus and put them under the control of Vedas and Brahmins. (105–06)

By 1917 he had opted out of Arya Samaj's fold and commenced engaging with philosophies that were more attuned to the needs of Hinduism's "undercastes."

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In 1922, he founded the Adi Dharma, a religion more suitable, in his opinion, for the "untouchables" because it divested them of their Hindu belonging and projected them as India's primal dwellers who had been subdued by Aryan invaders in a distant pre-Hindu epoch. It must be noted that while Swami Achhutanand's racial hypothesis about the beginnings of caste had a definite affinity to Jotirao Phule's theorization in this context, in his critique of the Arya Samaj, Achhutanand more or less anticipated the views Ambedkar expressed in *Annihilation of Caste*.[3]

Swami Achhutanand's numerous writings did not find forums for publication in mainstream Hindi presses of the era. Instead certain niche presses, which had been opened to enable access to publication to the totally marginalized minority of niche writers, offered him the opportunity to print and circulate these writings. The most prominent of these presses was Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, formerly christened Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, which Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu founded as an educated person born in 1899 to a relatively prosperous "lower caste" family of Lucknow. As per his own account, Jigyasu first came into contact with Swami Achhutanand in 1926 and, following that, he was inspired to write and publish through his press, founded in 1959, his chronicle of the outcaste communities in ancient India based on Adi Dharma ideology entitled *Bharat Ke Adi-Nivasiyon*. In this treatise, Jigyasu argues that the original inhabitants of India had been degraded and made into its modern-day "untouchables." Swami Achhutanand's own press in Kanpur, a 1925 initiative, was also the source of many books, periodicals, and newspapers: *Achhut*, the monthly newspaper that later became a daily called *Adi Hindu* and was in publication until 1932, and *Usha*, a monthly journal published from 1928. Not surprisingly, Swami Achhutanand, as one of the prominent Dalit leaders whose lives attained legendary status in the annals of the North Indian Dalit movement, became the subject of Dalit writing, specifically life writing, the most elaborate of which was a text that Jigyasu published in 1960. Another biography of Achhutanand, Guru Prasad Madan's text titled *Swami Achhutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva*, was published in 1969.

Indeed, life writing about eminent Dalit leaders gained currency in the period immediately following Achhutanand's death in 1933 and the rapid decline of the Adi Hindu mobilization, and several biographies of exemplary public figures among Dalits were brought out by presses sympathetic to the cause of the "undercastes." Of these, the notable were the booklet-form biographies of the mediaval-era poet-saint Ravidas (including Badloo Ram Sonkar's *Mahaprabhu Ravidas Ka Chamatkar* and Maharishi Ramdasjee Shastrapati's *Sri Ravidas Bhagwan Ki Prabhuta*), and of the modern-day messiah,

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Babasaheb Ambedkar (Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu's *Bhagwan Baba Saheb Ka Jeevan Sangharsh* and Ram Sajivan's *Bhagwan Baba Bheemrao Ambedkar*). Clearly, the production of these biographies, almost all of them more or less written in the tradition of hagiographies, was part of a project to inculcate a sense of self-esteem among ordinary Dalits by offering them worthy Dalit role models.

Supplementing the production of biographies of Dalit heroes was an enterprise of translating into Hindi the published works of front-ranking "undercaste" thinkers who had authored tracts in other languages. After the 1950s, Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow, Ashok Pustakalya, Kanpur, and other publication centers in Uttar Pradesh released the works of Jotirao Phule, E. V. Ramaswami "Periyar," and Babasaheb Ambedkar, among others.[4]

The 1960s also witnessed a trend of narrativizing the history of India from perspectives alternative to those of mainstream nationalist historians who, from the turn of the nineteenth century, started to frame counter-histories in response to the British imperial point of view in consonance with the rise of the nationalist temper. As scholars such as Badri Narayan and Charu Gupta have shown, Dalit historians endeavored to recover the lost memories of Dalit protagonists who were stellar participants in India's fight for independence from foreign rule starting with the 1857 Revolt. The case of Jhalkari Bai, a close associate of Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, is crucial in this respect. The point that Dalit historians make through the invocation of Dalit nationalists, particularly in the context of the First War of Independence, is that it was actually "undercastes" who fought for the freedom of the country, while the "upper caste" aristocracy only fought the foreign conquerors to restore their own deprived sovereignty.[5]

Dalit stories about the past, as Sarah Beth Hunt has pointed out in her book *Hindi Dalit Literature and the Politics of Representation*, were in circulation for a long time through printed material that Dalit presses produced (25–82). The rise of the Dalit pamphlet was particularly symptomatic of the growth of a new literary culture, or rather, a new literary counterculture, in North India by the middle decades of the twentieth century. This counterculture was obviously evidence of the presence of a subaltern counterpublic, another Dalit public similar to, but ahead in time, of the Dalit public that Ambedkar was instrumental in forging in the Maharashtra region from the 1940s through the 1950s. What is puzzling is why, in contrast to the Dalit counterpublic in Maharashtra, the Dalit counterpublic in North India, specifically in the United Provinces, has attracted such scarce attention from Dalit Studies academics and activists, especially given that more and more Dalit literary production started to be made available in the post-Indian

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independence years.[6] The neglect of these texts has made the contemporary proliferation of Hindi Dalit writings (including life writing) seem to be an unprecedented phenomenon.

Toral Jatin Gajarawala has cited a comment that Badri Narayan and A. R. Misra made to explain the tentativeness with which the Dalit counterpublic built itself up in the Hindi belt:

> [Dalits] were forced to stay away from the historical mainstream, peripheral as they were, deprived of access to education and surrounded by terror. They were not only forced to stay away from history but any kind of leisure, which is such a critical source in the creation of the culture of a community. The very nature of their jobs, and social functions that they were coerced to perform, prohibited them from owning and developing any cultural compartment for themselves or their community. They were not allowed to carry or own any weapon. Thus doomed to serve and comply, they were never in a position to be either donors or recipients of the contents of the existing civilization and culture. Orality was their only possession, or medium of communication of their anxieties, tribulations, of deprivations and anguish. They did not even have their religion to console themselves and in such an alienated state, they feared even to entertain the idea of expression of their woes in the world after death, for it was their evil actions in their previous life that has placed them in such a precarious social position and any questions pertaining to their existence would be considered to be violative of the divine design. (30)

From this extended comment on "an absent historical and cultural archive that is only now being recognized," Gajarawala deduces that there is an "unfortunate burden" on Dalit literature, meaning contemporary Dalit literature, to supplement what is missing (30).

It is indeed difficult to subscribe to the view of an archival lack in the face of ample proof that indicates otherwise. Misra and Narayan themselves send signals contrary to those emanated by the passage Gajarawala quoted from their edited volume:

> Contestations between various types of ideologies are evident in the literature published from the 1930s in India. Dalits challenged the Brahminical hegemonic order by utilizing the print medium; they further used it to counter the value framework erected by the dominant power group. In other words, the print medium was being utilized by the Dalits to subvert the ideological and cultural structure persisting since ancient times. It was commonly assumed that devoid of literacy and publications, Dalits were essentially a part of just the oral tradition. Their representation was considered to be confined to orality alone and the memories contained in it were expected to become fossilized and static when confronted with an ever-flowing cultural stream. Therefore, for injecting a new confidence and enthusiasm with greater mobilization power, the print medium was found to be highly effective by the Dalits . . . the print medium gives cultural self-expression to such groups

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> through the efforts of organic intellectuals of the community. This was understood by a visionary like Achhutanand in North India, and the Dalits in future followed rigorously the tradition laid down by him. (19)

Hence, it is not that there were no Dalits in print in North India in the early twentieth century—rather, printed texts by Dalits, as Mohandas Naimishray has pointed out, "remained ignored or unrecognized by the elite or upper castes" (qtd. in R. Gupta 33). The same point, broadly, has been made by Francesca Orisini, who notes that as far as the Hindi public sphere's engagements went, topics that were perceived by the male-dominated, "upper caste" middle classes, who were its custodians, to be not of "general" interest or of interest of a "parochial" kind alone (for instance, caste and gender-centered topics), were to be strictly kept beyond the pale of public debate. Public debate, it was felt, could not or should not address the agendas of discrete, "vested interest" sections within society. These sections had no claim to participate in debates in the public sphere; instead, "authorized" participants would "represent" the agendas of these sections. According to Orsini, this was the vantage point that granted more legitimacy to Munshi Premchand's narratives about society's "victims" than the narratives of the "victims" themselves (Hunt 19).

At a moment of ascendant anticolonial sentiment, the favored forms of public debate would, of course, be the issues that nationalism generated. But over time, the Ambedkarite discourse did find its resonance in the debates because of its head-on, high-profile collision with Gandhi's ideas, which framed India's national liberation enterprise. Perhaps this is the reason the Ambedkar movement's offshoot of the Dalit counterpublic has attained a hegemonic status and all too often subsumes other Dalit counterpublics that took shape simultaneously, or even earlier, in the rest of the country. For example, tracking the history of Dalit literature, Pradeep K. Sharma writes:

> The guiding force of Dalit literature becomes the Ambedkarite philosophy which represents a comprehensive worldview different from the upper caste hegemonic philosophy and incorporates Buddhism, Bhaktism and other protest traditions prevalent in the Indian society, like the verses of Shankaranand and Achhutanand (prevalent in Uttar Pradesh).
>
> Kanwal Bharti conclusively writes that the guiding ideology of Dalit authors cannot be centrist, leftist or rightist, not even Dalitist, but can only be the Ambedkarist vision. (79)

But more recently, Ramnarayan Rawat, who has done extensive and valuable work on the Chamars in Uttar Pradesh, has interrogated this position. After an acknowledgement of the fact that "most Dalit histories have focused on Maharashtra, particularly on movements for access to temple and wells in the

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1920s and on Dr. Ambedkar's interventions in constitutional politics," and further that "these events are generally viewed as marking the beginning of Dalit struggles in India" (Rawat 156), Rawat prepares to pit himself against the reductionist theorizations, such as that of Sudha Pai, about the "delayed development of Dalit consciousness" (Pai 38) in Uttar Pradesh. Is it true, he asks, that Uttar Pradesh, unlike Maharashtra, witnessed no Dalit awakening during the colonial period? His effort to answer the question alerts him to the scantiness of research undertaken in this field:

> There is not a single monograph that discusses the Adi-Hindu movement or its agenda in colonial Uttar Pradesh. Most of the studies that we have focus on urban Dalits, like Owen Lynch's study of the Jatavs in Agra and, more recently, Nandini Gooptu's chapter on "untouchable" assertion in the urban centres of Uttar Pradesh. There are few anthropological studies of Chamars except Brigg's in 1920 and some articles by Bernard Cohn in the 1960s. In fact the only historical accounts of the Adi-Hindu movement we have are by Dalit academics and activists. . . . So far, non-Dalit historians have shown no interest in these accounts and practically no effort has been made to engage with them, leaving the development of Dalit struggles nicely veiled. (156)

The issue, then, is not one of archival paucity versus plenitude, but one of unequal investigative energy invested in the examination of Dalit movements across the country. As a consequence of this, some Dalit movements, such as the ones in the Hindi belt, remain insufficiently scrutinized. This failure to study the movements by Dalits of different regions in their entirety has often prevented an appreciation of the cross-fertilization and supportive encouragement lent by these movements to one another. After all, how many remember the momentous signature campaign that Swami Achhutanand and his disciples mobilized to endorse Babasaheb Ambedkar's plea for separate electorates to be awarded to the "Depressed Classes" at the Round Table Conferences held in London between 1930 and 1932?

The most obvious reason for the oblivion to which Dalit self-expression of all kinds was relegated was the absence of the "three main platforms—books, journals and Kavi sammelans" that Orsini identified as being instrumental in the development of the Hindi public sphere (52). Because the Dalit print medium did not expand through similar platforms, especially the notable platform of journals in which many mainstream Hindi writers invested for the purpose of "serving Hindi," the presence of Dalit writers in Hindi remained obscure and often totally unacknowledged (Orsini 224).

Contemporary Dalit writing in Hindi, especially the autobiographies that several writers since the 1990s have penned, are evidence of the accumulated force of Dalit Chetna (Dalit identity politics) in North India prior to

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the post-Mandal-Mandir era, and indeed for over a span of almost a centur
Although my focus in the rest of this essay will be on two autobiographie
only—namely *Apne Apne Pinjre* and *Mera Bachpan Mere Kandhon Par*, writ
ten by Mohandas Namishray and Sheoraj Singh Bechain respectively, bot
members of the Chamar caste—at this moment there are already a host o
Dalit personal narratives in Hindi available in the marketplace. The transi
tion decades between the two centuries have proven to be as fertile for Dalit
personal narratives in Hindi as the 1970s and the 1980s were for Dalit per
sonal narratives in Marathi.[7] The most prominent among the other persona
narratives are Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* and Surajpal Chauhan's *Tiraskri*
narratives of members of the Bhangi (sweeper) caste. However, I have cho
sen to look at Chamar narratives in particular because of an interest in th
examination of the literary lineage of Achhutanand, himself a Chamar a
mentioned earlier, as well as the vanguard status of the Chamars among th
"untouchable" castes of North India, somewhat akin to that of the Mahars i
Maharashtra. Like the Mahars, the Chamars availed of the advantage of earl
absorption within the colonial administrative apparatus, albeit at subordinat
strata, to educate their offspring who, in turn, developed from within thei
own ranks the nucleus of a nascent Dalit intelligentsia. The two life writing
texts that I discuss below testify to the agency and autonomy of thought tha
present-day Chamars have inherited.

Arjun Dangle, in his introduction to the iconic volume *Poisoned Bread
Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*, has called the period be
tween 1978 and 1986 as the "golden" period of Dalit autobiographies i
Marathi. He mentions, in particular, Daya Pawar's *Baluta*, P. E. Sonkamble'
Arthvaninche Pakshi, and Laxman Mane's *Upara* in this connection, and also
praises the personal narratives of women writers such as Shantabai Kamble
Kumud Pawde, and others. For Dangle, the most notable phenomenon wa
the Ford Foundation's conferment of awards on *Bahuta* and *Upara*, an in
dication, in his opinion, of the responsibility shown by Dalit literature t
raise Marathi literature to an international status, "since *Baluta* and *Upar*
were the first Marathi books to win these awards" (xlii). None of the first
generation Dalit autobiographers in Hindi—Mohandas Naimishray, Om
prakash Valmiki, Surajpal Chauhan, or Sheoraj Singh Bechain—forceful
though their writings are, have yet earned even a national award at the leve
of the Sahitya Akadami awards, proof of the exclusivist character of the still
mainstream Hindi literary domain.

Since all of the above writers were born and brought up in a social milieu
in which caste markers were etched deep into their identities, "concealment o
caste," a trope made famous by the title of Dalit writer Baburao Bagul's shor

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story collection, *Jevha Mi Jaat Chorali Hoti* (When I Concealed My Caste), is not an option that any of them can exercise. Therefore, in their retrospective life stories, they invariably proclaim their caste affiliations frankly and without embarrassment. Mohandas Naimishray, who grew up as a boy in a slum in Meerut, is nonchalant in his declaration:

> Our basti was like other bastis in the town. The basti was called Chamar Gate to begin with, and later came to be known as Chamar Darwaza. People mostly referred to it as Chamar Darwaza. At the entrance to the basti, there was a huge gate. To begin with our basti was within the town, in one corner of it. As soon as it was evening, the gate would be shut. This is why the basti was called Chamar Gate. As the residents of the slum gathered awareness, they started to call it Jatav Gate. As such, in the municipal registers it was recorded as Karam Ali. In the election papers too, the same name was used. Some people, however, insisted on referring to it as the Chamar neighbourhood. Even today, rickshaw and tonga-drivers hail their clients by calling the destination Chamar Gate.
>
> About eighty families of our caste stayed in the basti. They were all wage-earning families. Some were shoe makers, some made slippers and some were coolies. (*Apne* 16–17)[8]

Naimishray—and Bechain—make the inextricable link between ancestral calling and caste abundantly clear. Before his father's premature death, Bechain, his elder brother, and father tried to earn a livelihood by collecting the carcasses of lifeless animals, skinning them and preparing them for tanning.

> At the time of my birth . . . Babba, Tau my father, would collect the dead animals from the village, skin them and take them to the hut on the outskirts. The entire process was an arduous one. The animal would be turned on its back and its four feet would be tied. A couple of bamboo rods would be passed through the tied limbs and four men would be required to lift the dead animal on their shoulder. . . . On account of the monopoly the Chamars enjoyed over the resources of production, the Banias, the Telis and the Yadavs would denigrate their profession. Muslims are now running a lucrative trade in dead animals. However the basic work is still done by Chamars. At Zarifnagar and Pali, several of my maternal relations . . . are working as contractual labourers at a minimal wage for lifting and skinning dead animals. It is for this reason that there has been no change or improvement in the quality of their lives. Even today, none of them is literate. Ignorant of the letter, they do not even vote according to choice and therefore their judgement has no role to play in the making of governments. (78–79)[9]

The "persistence of caste," as Anand Teltumbde has designated it, as a system of cultural, political, social and economic discrimination, and the key cause for the degradation of the untouchables, troubles both Bechain and Naimishray. It is this anxiety that is articulated by Naimishray through his

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aphorism, "The geography of the town [Meerut] was changing, but its history has remained unchanged" (*Mera* 11).

The paradox of a timeless history is, of course, a staple attribute of the civilizational paradigm against which India's survival as an apparently seamless community of people from antiquity to the current moment is often explained. Both of the autobiographers I discuss below highlight the disastrous implications of this idea of transtemporality, especially for the downtrodden sections of India's society. To paraphrase Naimishray's remark, history seems to be a state of eternal stasis for the downtrodden, yet the disruption of this illusion is imperative and can be achieved only if and when the downtrodden struggle to alter their circumstances. Thus, Bechain's effort to track his genealogy back to Jawahar, the helpless, landless peasant from Bhojpur village in Bulandshahar District who was a direct ancestor, proceeds out of an anxiety for self-validation.

> There is no historical record that testifies to the lives of these five or six generations that spanned a period of two to four hundred years. It is in recognition of the necessity to belong to a context and the need to be rooted to one's past, that I have brought this record into the public domain. I may have got a few names or time sequences mixed up but nothing has been added on. The generations descending from Jawahar shared his fate—deprived of any means of livelihood, they were forced into working for others—on fields, in homes and other places. No one can comprehend the import of my struggle for existence without knowing this generational pattern. (*Apne* 11)

In recalling the unvariegated pattern of the lives of his forefathers, Bechain is proud of the distance he has traveled to become the person he is. Similarly, Naimishray attests to the crucial function of "undercaste" agency in helping to break fatalism, albeit with a certain amount of reluctance.

> The sun of Independence was beginning to shine more brightly. Its light and its shadows played around us, but we had more of the share of shadows than of light. However we were always prepared to struggle for more light. We did not want to beg for it, but nor did we want to linger on in the shadows. The conflict was within us and outside us too. (*Apne* 25–26)

At the same time there is an air of self-assurance and self-confidence in both writers as they narrate the past, because the past is a place they no longer inhabit. While they have been witnesses to it, they are today, as Hunt has put it, "securely part of the middle classes":

> Through much struggle and against many obstacles, these individuals availed of the reservation facilities provided by the Indian Constitution, acquired high levels of

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> education and government jobs, and joined the Delhi middle classes. This period of the 1970s and the early 1980s was also a time of increasing politicization of Dalit identity within the Hindi public sphere, which led to the establishment of the Dalit labour organization BAMCEF in Delhi in 1976, the political mobilisations of the BSP across North India from 1984 and the controversy over the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report in 1990. Entering the urban middle classes opened up a new range of possibilities for these writers, including middle-class habitus, or cultural practices and values, as well as the ability to consume and to produce middle-class cultural commodities, particularly literature circulating in the mainstream Hindi public sphere. (134)

While these writers, therefore, in their private lives may be said to straddle two worlds, as writers they are firmly located in the metropolis.

Vani Prakashan, a renowned mainstream publishing house in Delhi, has published both Naimishray's and Bechain's autobiographies, which have been reviewed in the mainstream Hindi media. And, without a doubt, their intended and implied readership is a middle-class reading public. Gradually, too, autobiographies such as these have been engaging the attention of professional academics and finding space in university syllabi and curricula. The study of Dalit autobiographies in Hindi is more and more becoming a focus of master's of philosophy and PhD dissertations not just in Hindi departments but in departments of comparative literature, English, and sociology as well. Translation projects of major English-language publishing houses have further enhanced their readership as well, giving them a global reach.

All this is not to suggest that access to the Hindi literary mainstream has been easy for Dalit autobiographers who write in Hindi. Very often their autobiographies have been isolated from their other sometimes superior literary productions and published because of a popular misconception, on the part of publishers, that autobiographical writings are the most popular form of Dalit self-expression and therefore will attract the maximum number of buyers. This certainly holds true in the case of both Bechain and Naimishray. Correspondingly, other forms of "creative" writing are not only neglected, as mentioned earlier, but these writers are also not considered to be thinkers who hold their own opinions on matters of general interest. Thus all these writers, notwithstanding how thought-provoking their pronouncements might be on issues apart from caste, have been perceived as Dalit thinkers at best and not thinkers at large. Why is it that not one of the Dalit autobiographers from the Hindi belt, or Dalit writers in Hindi for that matter, has ever been ascribed the designation of a public intellectual?

The answer to this question is to be found in the straitjacketed definition of the literary as far as the Hindi literary mainstream is concerned and its

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inability to accommodate within its sphere more than a very limited range of Dalit self-expression. To quote Badri Narayan and A. R. Misra:

> Although abundant in literature containing self-expression of the Dalits, North India lacks in producing an established mode of Dalit literature acceptable to the educated and professionally well-placed population. . . .
>
> Further, in the oral tradition, Dalit expressions have assumed many forms, for example, songs, drama, caste-oriented history but their acceptance too has been discouraging. These kinds of literature have been constantly knocking at the door but have always been refused entry even into the amphitheatre of the established and recognised arena of articulation. The terrain of Hindi literature is so well tailored and designed that unless a writing corresponds successfully to its demands, it has no chances of inclusion; iconoclastic forms are hardly encouraged. (35–36)

The noted Dalit writer Kanwal Bharti further reinforces this point:

> From the point of view of the Dalit intelligentsia, Hindi literary history and Hindi criticism are both casteist. Within the context of either, a Brahmin writer who has written as few as three stories will find mention, but not so a Dalit writer who has a dozen or more books to his name. I am not here referring to Hira Dom . . . I am speaking about Swami Achhutanand who was a poet, and a playwright and the editor of a monthly journal as well. But there is no discussion of him in Hindi literary history . . . Because in the view of [the literary historians], he was casteist, he talked about Dalits and wrote about them.

It is for the benefit of the mainstream Hindi reading public that both Naimishray and Bechain cast an ironic glance at elite representations of their respective home turfs. On the one hand, Bechain takes on the Gandhian idealization of Nadrauli, his native village, rendered in verse by the freedom fighter, Raghunath Shastri:

> Shastriji had a long poem about our village, entitled "Nandnandini Nadrauli," and presented it to me. The poem highlighted the village's scenic beauty and was from an aesthetic perspective, no doubt, praiseworthy, but it had a sub-text of self-advertisement that one finds in the compositions of courtier poets. . . . The seamy side of village life—the curse of untouchability, the pitiable existence of its subaltern groups such as Dalits and women, group rivalries born out of unenlightened attitudes—did not find any mention in his text. Since Shastriji himself belonged to the dominant Yadav caste within the village, he was not anchored within the dynamic of oppression which operated within village society. (*Mera* 31–32)

On the other hand, Naimishray soaks with satire his preliminary panegyric on the town of Meerut:

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> The town was not very big. But it was grand in its history, its culture and its traditions. From time to time people would commemorate its illustrious past. In their speeches, leaders would dwell on its greatness. At school, children would be taught to be proud of their town. The teachers themselves felt their chests swell up as they celebrated their town's name and fame. (*Apne* 9)

The "glorious heritage" of the town, as Naimishray outlines it, however, includes a fair amount of Chamar-baiting, an everyday phenomenon that has been elevated to the status of a fine art and has often become a popular mode of entertainment for "upper castes" (11–12, 35).

The subversive edge in these narratives obviously derives from the readerly consciousness that informs them. Both Naimishray and Bechain are, in their own time, drawn toward books and become avid readers. To a great extent their politicization grows out of their perusal of radical, especially Marxist literature (Hunt 137). But their acquaintance with left movements in the country alerts each of them to the limitations of Marxist praxis in dealing with the dynamics of caste oppression.

Not surprisingly the description of the complexities and the contradictions in Chamars' day-to-day lives in these autobiographies is unprecedented in non-Dalit literature about caste, even in Munshi Premchand's emotive fiction.[10] There is no attempt made in these texts to shy away from the blotches and blemishes of Dalit society and of the conflicts within it—the animosity of the Chamars toward the Bhangis for instance, or the pervasiveness of patriarchy in Dalit communities. These are constitutive elements of the experience that have molded Chamars and Bhangis into Dalit subjects and have prevented them from being reduced to paradigms of the predicament of untouchability.

What is at stake here, as Gajarawala has pointed out, is an aesthetics of solidarity rather than an aesthetics of sympathy:

> Dalit texts may be labelled as such not only on the basis of identity but through a different narrative structure, one that aspires to a solidarity rather than to a sympathy.
>
> The radical shift in worldview is the preeminent mode by which this occurs. It isn't enough to say that Dalit literature seems to be about Dalit peoples, in Dalit spaces, doing "Dalit things." Replacing a hegemonic space and time with a Dalit one, or Dalit ones, re-anchors ideologically every Dalit moment, plot turn, dialogue, action. Following a tradition set by realist writers in many places and times, Dalit writing creates new literary spaces (a Valmiki home, for example) and new literary actions (the prototypical animal skinning), as narrative forms of compensation, and demands that they be read. Dalit characters do not simply happen upon a predetermined hegemonic stage but rather are legitimate actors in spaces no longer contrived elsewhere. The ideological spaces that ensue are in fact born from that space rather than pre-fabricated. (53)

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Within these spaces, which might be called Dalit-determined spaces, t shortcomings of relationships among Dalits may be acknowledged and e larged upon without fear or favor. "Truth telling" has a different register f Dalit autobiographers than for realist non-Dalit writers who look upon Dal only as objects of commiseration. Both Naimishray as well as Bechain a candid about the sexism of Dalit men in their individual conduct as well as their collective functioning. Educating girls was not the norm in the *basti* which Naimishray was born and brought up. Almost all girls were confin to the home and hearth, and most of them were married off at a tender age

> The idea of girls venturing out of their homes before marriage was frowned upon. Not only that, girls who were unmarried were submitted to a strict code of behavior. In any case, such girls and women were fewer in number than men and boys in our slum. Among the female population, there was a predominant number of grandmothers, mothers, aunts and wives of brothers. There were a relatively small number of unmarried females. The father of a new-born girl child would clasp his head in his hands in despair. And the mother would turn grim. The girl child was associated with sorrow, deprivation, contention and conflict. (*Apne* 37)

Bechain's mother, married and widowed at an early age and remarried twi after that, at her father's behest, to men of her father's choice, is the embod ment of the travails of an average Dalit housewife. Burdened with seven children and systematically maltreated by her husband, she is a much-ba tered person who grows old before her time and eventually succumbs to h many ailments. The discriminatory treatment that Dalit women and gi have to put up with is highlighted through the example a choric song wom sing on the occasion of Bechain's sister's marriage:

> O dear father, you gave my brother
> A palatial home to live in style
> And I have been sent into exile.
> O dear father! I am the garbage pile
> In your courtyard, disposed of the very next day.
> O dear father! I am the bird of this house
> That will fly abroad one day. (*Mera* 107)

The subordination and silencing of Dalit women and girls that Dalit autob ographers (who are usually men) evokes exposes the hierarchical nature of th Dalit counterpublic in North India, a feature that Narayan does not stress i his book *The Making of the Dalit Public in North India: Uttar Pradesh 1950- Present.*

Nor does Narayan's book offer due consideration to the fragmentary na ture of the counterpublic that reveals itself in Naimishray's and Bechain

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autobiographies. Ruminating upon the contempt with which Chamars held Bhangis, Bechain wonders "why the Chamars considered themselves superior to the Bhangis":

> Whenever people gathered under the neem tree to relate long stories, caste distinctions would be immediately visible in the manner in which the Chamars would occupy the higher parts of the hill and the Bhangis the lower. If a Yadav or a Muslim turned up, then both bhangis and chamars would vacate their places and sit on the ground. Before joining the Arya Samaj even I was deluded into believing that Chamars were superior to Bhangis, whereas economically we were weaker than them. (*Mera* 82)

Naimishray concurs with Bechain on the issue and is even more sharp in his criticism of intra-Dalit rivalries:

> Even among the Dalits there are innumerable networks of castes and sub-castes which sometimes scatter and splinter Dalit identity and unity. There were far too many incompatabilities between the caste groups—and always plenty of people to aggravate them and few to resolve the knots. (*Apne* xxiv)

These incidents of glaring inequities within Dalit communities of North India raise questions about the real and potential exclusions from the emergent Dalit counterpublic in the region. Narayan, who has researched extensively on this topic, concedes, in line with Fraser's theorization of the subaltern counterpublic, that "the Dalit public, as a counter-public, may not be seen as a homogenous alternative public but as heterogeneous and varied and full of various kinds of tensions that are present within the Dalits as a group" (*Apne* 63). However, he stops short of the admission that Dalits, because of the very architecture of the system that condemns them to being downtrodden, are sometimes as complicit with the system's governing ideology of marking distinctions by birth as are the "upper castes," and that this possibility often compromises the desired subaltern militancy with their numerous, top-to-bottom arranged ranks. It is therefore difficult for Dalits to develop, in the short run, an autonomous and authentic counterconsciousness to the caste-consciousness within which they are imbricated from the moment of their socialization. As the autobiographies studied have shown us, a coordinated and consolidated Dalit opposition, beyond all internal schisms, may still be a long time in the making, at least in North India. In this period of the movement's gestation, therefore, different shades of resistant Dalit public opinion from individual as well as collective quarters have made themselves heard and have been circulated in print, and these currently form the nucleus of a steadily expanding Dalit counterpublic that is likely to crystallize in the future.

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What is the heritage of the counterconsciousness of present-day Da writers in Hindi, such as Naimishray and Bechain? Ambedkar is a presence both of these personal narratives, but he is definitely not the central presen in either. In Naimishray's narrative, he is a distant, almost mythic figure. Th news of his demise envelops all the Chamar households in gloom. Bechai reports in his narrative that he learned about Ambedkar at an advanced pha of his young adulthood. Neither of the authors expresses an indebtedness t Ambedkar as a literary mentor. On the contrary, in their discursive pros both of them have paid glowing tributes to Achhutanand as a man of letter For Bechain,

> an exploration of the foundations [of Dalit literature in Hindi] that emerged after the attainment of our independence in 1947 would . . . require the researcher to investigate the period immediately preceding that of Ambedkar during which Swami Achhutanand, the founder of the Adi Hindu Mahasabha and of the journal *Adi Hindu*, and poet, dramatist, historian and propagandist of a distinct religious faith, articulated through his literary productions a community consciousness of the Dalit people. ("Voices")

Naimishray goes a step further with his remark:

> If there were to be a fact based re-writing of Dalit history, then maybe Swami Achhutanand's role in the context of North India would not be seen as less than Ambedkar's. Also, the extremely important role of accumulated local consciousness on small stages in the colonial period transforms Dalits into an united community with the power of writing. (*Hindi* 52)

Rather than a utopian vision of the annihilation of caste, Acchutanand provided the successive generations of Dalit writers who were under his influenc with an ideological apparatus to combat caste, the foundational tool of which was the print medium. Badri Narayan and A. R. Misra attest to Acchuta nand's importance: "Through [his publications] Achhutanand not only conveyed the philosophy of liberation from social castigation, but also established the significance of the print media in Dalit mobilization and identity-forma tions" (18). Namishray and Bechain, and other contemporary Dalit writers of North India, continue to make avid use of the print medium and sustain the Dalit counterpublic in their region while, to quote Gail Omvedt, "the early promise of Dalit literature in Marathi [in this direction] has withered" (xvi). The "silent revolution," an epithet which Christophe Jaffrelot coined to describe "the rise of the lower castes in North India"[13] has no doubt been accomplished by factors such as the steady efflorescence of an "undercaste" literary culture.

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NOTES

1. All translations from the works of Swami Achhutanand Harihar, Mohandas Naimishray, and Sheoraj Singh Bechain that feature in this essay are my own.
2. See Amardeep.
3. There is surprisingly very little material available on Swami Achhutanand. The sole full-length publication in English on him, as far as I am aware, is Gooptu's brief monograph. The book, *Multiple Marginalities*, is, however, also very useful in this connection. There are, of course, a few more books in Hindi available on this key anticaste intellectual of North India.
4. For more information about Dalit print culture in North India in the early decades see Amardeep and Rawat.
5. See Dinkar.
6. See Amardeep.
7. The last two decades of the twentieth century was a period of extreme political ferment, especially in North India, as a result of both "upper" and "lower caste" mobilization around the issue of "reservations" for members of the so-called "backward" castes in the sectors of education and employment, and a reactionary Hindu communal mobilization on the issue of construction of a Ram Temple on a spot at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, which was claimed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram.
8. Because the English translation of this text is not yet available, I am providing page numbers for the original text, written in Hindi, here and in all subsequent quotations.
9. Deeba Zafir and I have prepared these quotations from an unpublished translation of the text. Page numbers are for the original Hindi text, here and in all subsequent quotations.
10. "The Problem of Premchand," as Brueck calls it, has engaged more or less all students of Dalit writing in Hindi. It is almost as though Premchand casts a shadow over Dalit writing in Hindi, and the steering clear of his shadow is necessary for Hindi Dalit writing to be seen in a proper light. For more on this, see Gajarawala.
11. This phrase is taken from the title of the book.

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TAMIL DALIT LITERATURE
AESTHETICS, POLITICS, AND LIFE NARRATIVES

PARTHASARATHI MUTHUKKARUPPAN

The emergence of Dalit literature in Tamil in the forms of poetry, short stories, plays, novels, and life narratives, along with subsequent Dalit criticism has enriched Tamil literature in unprecedented ways, demanding that the literary canon shift while redefining the field of aesthetics. Life narratives have a special significance in the field of Dalit literature across India. Though life narratives were not a prominent mode of Dalit literary experiments in Tamil, the sensibilities that are generated around life narratives in general, I suggest, do play a significant role in constituting what Tamil Dalit literature is. That is to say, life narratives are not merely part of Dalit literature but in many ways these narratives determine and constitute Dalit literature.

In this essay, I address some fundamental questions: what is Dalit literature? What do we mean when we say Tamil Dalit literature? What are the aesthetics that mark Tamil Dalit literature as singular, distinguishing it from other critical developments in modern Tamil literature such as Dravidian and Marxist literatures? My interest here is not to *define* Dalit literature but to show how these questions continue to have a ghostly presence in discussions of Dalit literature and in the criteria that enable and are constitutive of categories like Dalit literature or Dalit aesthetics. I suggest that these questions are historical in nature and warrant historical explanations rather than abstract normative ones. That is to say, these questions warrant certain attention to the historical contexts from which they have been posed and from which explanations have been sought. They cannot be viewed as questions of an abstract nature devoid of any historicity. The emergence of life narratives and their roles in constituting the gamut of Dalit literature assumes enormous significance in this regard.

Ideologically, to name something is to assign it a place in the horizon of social and historical order. Thus, it is worthwhile to explore what the term

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"Tamil Dalit literature" entails. Discussing Dalit literature in the context of Maharashtra, Aniket Jaaware has pointed out that there is a contradiction in the very constitution of the name. On the one hand, Dalit literature, like any other literature, entails universal protocols of reading and interpreting, and on the other hand, it also seeks a particular treatment by underscoring difference (Jaaware 6). Jaaware detects a parallel contradiction in the history of Indian polity in the way Ambedkar configured the relationship between Dalits and citizens, insofar as Dalits are citizens like anybody else but are also in need of special constitutional protection. Significantly, Jaaware's analogy rightly locates the historically emergent problematic of Dalit literature as it is often determined by the identity of the writer. Jaaware's analogy also brings to view another problem: the disjuncture between the field of welfare policy that claims to ameliorate the conditions of the needy and the domain of art and literature that "works at the level of fundamental attitudes," as Theodor Adorno would put it (78). If these are the contradictions historically posed by the very constitution of the term "Dalit literature" to the realm of literary theory, the adjective "Tamil" adds yet another level of complexity within the field of literary history. In what follows, I signpost some of the experimental moves that Tamil Dalit writers make through their negotiation of existing forms of literary expression and underscore their aesthetic and political significance.

Bama's life narrative, *Karukku*, published in 1992, is often considered the first work of Dalit literature in Tamil. It is significant that the text was written as a life narrative. *Karukku*'s publication designated Bama as a Dalit writer. In the world of letters, the emergence of "Dalit," and in this case "woman" as well, was significant particularly because of how Bama has often been identified as both "Dalit" and "writer." It is precisely because of certain aesthetic connotations of a life narrative that Bama's subjectivity gained such importance. However, writers' social backgrounds have continued to wield importance even when authors produce texts that are not life narratives. While there were writers from "untouchable" backgrounds writing long before Bama, it was not until years after the initial publication of their works and the movements for Dalit liberation that critics, in some cases writers themselves, assigned the terms "Dalit" and "writer" to those early writers. While the designation "writer" has been understood as a universal category of creativity, the insertion of the category "Dalit" into the literary world challenged the universality of "writer" and revealed how the writer position had been occupied primarily by "upper castes."

Untouchable communities and those within the world of literary production have had at least three responses to the crisis of the supposed universality of the term "writer." First, a set of people, most of whom have already

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established themselves as writers, do not want to claim that they are Dal writers—they want their writings to be evaluated *not* on the basis of wh caste they belong to but on the basis of the aesthetic significance of the work. Imayam, Poomani, Cho Dharman, and others firmly hold this pos tion. Dharman's statement is exemplary here: "I am a Dalit by birth; not b writing" (24).[1] They have insisted on the aesthetics of writing—includin craft, nuanced understanding about social relationships, and command ov narrative language—and have argued that the labels "Dalit literature" an "Dalit writer" stigmatize on the basis of writers' identity. They claim that sim ilar works by "upper caste" writers are hailed as literature without any qualif cation. A second set of writers has noted a certain kind of transformation a ter they designated themselves as Dalit writers, claiming that there has been perspective change in their writing. For instance, Abhimani notes, "Initially, was absorbed in the philosophy of Marx, Periyar, Ambedkar—in that order—bu soon changed the order of importance to Ambedkar, Periyar, Marx" (Satyana rayana and Tharu 73). And a third set of writers who have emerged as bot "Dalit" and "writer" reveal that they have primarily identified themselves a Dalit writers since they first started writing. They are a new generation o writers who largely belong to the lower-middle-class strata in which Bama too, could be located. It is important to note that the writers' Dalit identit and authorial status have been constituted simultaneously. They have object ed to the first set of writers and their emphasis on how aesthetics are seem ingly assigned a sacred space beyond the bounds of the ideology of writing and literary production itself. They have argued for Dalit literature on the ba sis of identity and foregrounded politics rather than aesthetics. By and large the problems of aesthetics and politics are placed in opposition to each other

While there are variations in identifying and not identifying as Dalit writ ers, a larger conceptual problem has emerged through debates around Dali writing that has often posed the categories of aesthetics and politics as two poles. I suggest that ideas about Dalit literature often bear a certain subjec tive determinism whereby the writer's identity largely determines what is and what is not Dalit literature. It seems to me that one of the specific aesthetic features of life narratives—for example, the centrality of the writing subject and her social position—continues to determine overall perspectives on Dalit literature. While this particular aesthetic of life narratives and their exten sion onto the field of Dalit writing made possible the emergence of many writers from Dalit background as not just consumers but also producers, the same has also stigmatized writers from "untouchable" communities in such a way that they will forever remain incapable of transcending their identities as "Dalit writers."

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Since the aesthetics of life narratives help determine the field of literary production, a social phenomenon external to the fabric of the text, let us look at *Karukku* and its textual operation to locate the ways in which this life narrative forges community relationships within the text and negotiates with the dominant forms of realism. This analysis helps us in understanding the ways in which the Dalit authorial subject, the one who transformed her place in the social world from a mere consumer of literature to a producer, claims to locate herself within the community. While the community still occupies the side of physical labor within the ideological grids of the division of physical and mental labor, through remembering the past, the author re-members herself in the community.

Karukku recounts the life experience of the author in nine short chapters. The experience recounted spans the village life and years in school, college, and a Roman Catholic nunnery, from which Bama eventually walks out. In all these spaces, both modern institutions (like the church, the college, and the hostel) and traditional village settings, her experience of caste and "untouchability" is central. The book speaks of the communal life of Christian Parayars filled with humor, hardships, helplessness, and courage. *Karukku* opens the windows to readers of Parayars' lives and their joys and sufferings. Until *Karukku*'s publication, emergent literary texts did not provide firsthand access to and familiarity with Parayars' lives. In addition, unlike most of the Dalit literary works that foreground Hindu caste practices, *Karukku* discusses caste practices within Christianity.

When *Karukku* was published, initial responses focused on the language Bama used. Much of the public discussion missed the significance of the book, and many evaluated the book on the basis of standard yardsticks of literature such as artistry and diction. One of the bases on which the book received criticism was the use of "vulgar" Tamil that Bama subsequently claimed as a Dalit language (Suryachandran). Bama claims, however, that *ketta varthai* (abusive language) is a weapon for Dalit women who are otherwise bereft of any power and authority. It was not uncommon in Tamil literature—at least after the arrival of Karisal literature (a set of literary works emerging from "the black soil regions" of Tamil Nadu and largely written in a regional dialect)—that "vulgar" terms were used in literary texts. Unlike the young feminist poets (largely belonging to "middle class/intermediate castes") who emerged a decade later and deployed explicit political language to speak about sexuality, the female body, and the perversity of male chauvinism, Bama's concerns focused on everyday communal and caste relationships and used the language of common people without sanitization. In certain ways, Bama's language prefigured the social significance of sexual economies, their intimate connections with

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casteism, and the ways of translating them into literary artifacts. Sexuality, however, assumes a minimal importance in *Karukku*, and it is caste that runs through the text as the prominent problem that subjugates Dalit men and women.

If autobiography is putting one's "self" out and being exposed to the public, *Karukku* brings a new dimension of such exposure to the fore. Writing on the strategies that Bama deploys in *Karukku*, M. S. S. Pandian notes that the text produces a certain anonymity by not disclosing the names of the village, individuals, and places ("Writing" 36). However, community members from Bama's village perceived the opposite of what has been suggested by Pandian's reading. Even more so than the author of the narrative, Bama's community demonstrated their concern over their lives being displayed for public consumption. Indeed, after her text's publication, Bama was not allowed to enter her village for some time, and there were instances of villagers quarreling with her family members (Suryachandran). It would be wrong to read community members' responses as a result of the collapse of the distinction between the narrating subject and the subjects within the narrative. The important point to note here is that the villagers were not identifying Bama as one among them, but were in fact able to grasp the gap between themselves and Bama. In other words, it is not a sense of a collectivity that prompted the villagers to oppose Bama but the absence of such a collective self. It is evident from these instances that the villagers felt that their pathetic life conditions were exposed and they felt humiliated. More importantly, they also criticized how Bama's account revealed the nicknames of many Dalits from her village but not the nicknames of her family members.[2] This critique brings into stark relief notions about the form of Dalit autobiography and the suggestion that the Dalit autobiography is not about an individual self but rather about the collective self of the Dalit community.[3] On the contrary, what is important is to recognize the presence of the narrating subject, narrativized subjects, and the relationship between both.

Like any other Dalit life narrative, *Karukku* appears to present itself as a life narrative of a community or a collective self. This presentation manifests at the formal structure of the language that Bama's life narrative inhabits. However, the kind of relationship between the community and the self that is forged in *Karukku*'s substratum in an ideological register is quite different. Unlike many writings that preceded Bama's, the narrator's language in *Karukku* and the characters' language, appearing within inverted commas, are not presented in a hierarchical relationship. Following modern Tamil literature, Dalit literature has mostly deployed a narrative language in which a hierarchy is maintained between the language of the narrator and the subject's language

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within the narrative. Even in the works of most canonical Dalit writers, the narrative language is largely in standardized Tamil, while the characters within the narrative speak in colloquial dialect, which is always in quotes. As observed by Colin MacCabe, this hierarchical aesthetics of writing belongs to nineteenth-century bourgeois English realist novels:

> While those sections in the text which are contained in inverted commas may cause a certain difficulty for the reader—a certain confusion vis-a-vis what really is the case—this difficulty is abolished by the unspoken (or more accurately the unwritten) prose that surrounds them. (8)

The transgression of this specific feature of the nineteenth-century English realist novel—that is, of a particular style of hierarchy within the language—is something new that is strikingly visible in Bama's writings. The significance of such enunciation is that the gap between the narrative language and the language of the subjects who speak within the narrative is erased at the level of the formal structure of language. Does this mean that, since Bama maintains this language treatment in all her works, Bama's works transgress a realist aesthetic? It may sound irrelevant to ask whether Bama's life narrative is realist or not, since any life narrative is "realist" in an obvious but trivial sense insofar as it is about real lives. However, it is Bama's reworking of the form, bearing the narrative conventions of both life narratives and the novel, that allows for a discussion of realism. And it is the question of realism that poses the need to comprehend the relationship between the narrative language and the language of the subjects who speak.

If one steps back from an examination of Bama's formal language structure, one might identify the gap between the narrative language and the language of the subjects who speak within the narrative working in *Karukku* at a deeper level. In other words, this gap exists between the enunciation and what has been enunciated. The narrating subject presents herself as a representative of the community while simultaneously distancing herself from it by marking out a singular space for herself. She does this by narrating a political awareness, a concern for the unity of the subjugated castes, heroic adventures, and a Dalit consciousness of the self. These same qualities are not present in her community members who appear in the narrative. The narrator is a rational political being unlike the subjects who appear within the narrative. For instance, within the Christian nunnery, Bama gets frustrated by the obedience and obsequious behavior of the subservient Dalit workers who tolerate the abusive language of "upper caste" nuns (27). She laments that Dalits internalize the perceptions of "upper castes" about Dalits and believe that they are ugly and "untouchables" and also transfer that knowledge of inferiority

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to their next generations (28). Bama continues to preach that Dalits shou dare to break caste and transform caste society. The novelty of this narrati is that though it is presented in the same dialect the subjects speak, it mak the narrator as a politically aware and conscious individual.[4] The obedie subjects in the narrative remain like the slave whose consciousness is nothi but the consciousness for the master in the classical Hegelian dialectic a they are presented as if progress in the dialectic has ceased forever. This is t way in which the individual self is asserted and *Karukku* falls in line with t realist narrative.[5] What is also interesting is that in the abolition of the g in the formal language between the narrating self and the subjects within t narrative, what has also been abolished (not in a real sense but as a strateg deployment of language) is the class distinction between the community a the narrating self.

While the autobiographical form was easily accepted by the general rea ership, other forms, such as poetry and fiction, were resisted by general rea ers on various grounds. It is worth recalling that Dalit autobiography as form was much appreciated among the middle-class/"upper caste" readers a long as the autobiographical narrative did not bring to a crisis the way th had been making sense of the social world and the institution of literatur If life narratives are to be understood as exposing the intricate economy c caste and its transactions in a communal context, the real paradox emerges i a subsequent conjuncture where the larger society welcomes life narratives a literary artifacts, even as the persistence of caste continues to demonstrate i vulgarity on an everyday basis.[6] This conjuncture leads us to cast our susp cion at the risk of sounding politically incorrect: do life narratives normali the practice of caste by the processes of repeatedly narrating the barbarity c caste as such in the text? It also has to be mentioned here that life narrativ have a special place among educated middle-class readers and are welcom more enthusiastically than other fictive narratives. While it appears self-e planatory in the case of life narratives that it is not possible for one to wri somebody else's life experiences, this problem of subjective determination o cupies a centrality even in Dalit fictive narratives on caste.

Nokkadu: Tamil Dalit Sirukathaikal (Disease: Tamil Dalit Short Stories was one of the earliest literary works to carry the term "Dalit" in the title. Ab himani, himself an associate of the Indian People's Front, a Marxist-Leninis outfit, wrote in the preface that his stories were based on the conflict betwee the "dominant backward castes" and the subjugated Dalits. He believes tha his work could serve as a spark to the ongoing struggle for social liberatio that Dalits are undertaking. Further, he notes that his stories "would shak the barbaric roots of the feudal culture" (Abhimani n.p.).[7] He also warns tha

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his stories would bring revolt and quotes Maxim Gorky as stating that literature is meant to bring revolts. He concludes the preface by declaring that literature is about truth and "truth is meant to be red hot. Let the dead-leaves-like-rubbish culture turn to ashes in truth" (n.p.). Abhimani's stories are not so much oriented toward offering political resolutions to the problem of caste than to disclosing the complexities of caste relationships, oppression, and the economy of humiliation.

A story in the collection entitled "Nokkadu" needs special mention. The story discloses the plight of Karuthayi, an Arunthathiyar woman, who cleans the dry toilets in a small town. Left with no other source of income, she depends on the people of the town for her sustenance. In a torrential rainy season, Karuthayi falls sick from dysentery and is not able to work for a few days. Eventually, a landlady forces a sickened Karuthayi to clean the lavatories and when Karuthayi does, she cannot resist using a lavatory due to her dysentery. Abhimani's narrative brings to the fore how, because of deep-rooted casteism, the Hindu world is horrified by the very idea of Karuthayi using this lavatory. In a way, Abhimani plays on the term *nokkadu* (disease) to expose the sickness of caste society and the need for a cure.

In 1994, Devakanthan, a Sri Lankan writer then living in Tamil Nadu, reviewed Abhimani's short story collection in his quarterly magazine, *Elakku*. Devakanthan posed a few questions concerning the distinct nature of Dalit literature. Devakanthan's questions were critical of the very term "Dalit literature." The following are his questions:

> Are the stories called Dalit literature due to the stench of feces and urine? . . . Is Dalit literature called so because it is written by Dalits? . . . Can a non-Dalit with a Dalit consciousness write Dalit literature? If not, how is it possible for Dalits who are not engaged in menial occupations? . . . Does Dalit literature refuse to be confined in the category of realist literature? Why does not Dalit literature evolve into a broader category such as workers' literature? (qtd. in Sivasankaran 49, 51, 51–52, 53)

In a subsequent issue, T. K. Sivasankaran, a prominent Marxist critic, responded to these questions. Sivasankaran noted that the stench of feces and urine is not new to Tamil and, indeed, works of K. Daniel (a Sri Lankan Tamil writer from an "untouchable" washerman community) introduced them after the 1960s in the notable works *Panchamar* and *Panchakonankal*. Sivasankaran states that experiments with language can be appreciated as long as they strengthen a particular work of art, but at the same time, it is the freedom of the readers to reject those works that violate the boundaries of civility. He also traces the legacy of Dalit literature to Subramania Bharathi (1882–1921), an Indian nationalist writer from Tamil Nadu, and views Dalit

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literature as part of progressive literature since the 1930s. According to Siva sankaran, Dalit literature is not necessarily written only by Dalits, and eve works by non-Dalits that carry a Dalit consciousness could be called Dal literature. He adds that it is a narrow view to consider only Dalits as Dal writers, and asserts that the view that only Dalits engaged in traditional, de meaning occupations could produce Dalit literature is not productive. Ove all, Sivasankaran suggests that there has been a tradition of Dalit literatu in Tamil Nadu and that the new Dalit writings need to be located within th legacy of such progressive literature and viewed as part of its tradition.

While Sivasankaran places the history of Dalit literature parallel to th history of modern literature in Tamil and suggests a diachronic explanatio Raj Gowthaman arrives at a synchronic explanation to suggest a rupture i the way Dalits are represented in modern Tamil literature, a rupture occa sioned by the emergence of Dalit writers in the early 1990s. In *Poi + Abatha* = *Unmai* (Lie + Nonsense = Truth), Gowthaman ruthlessly critiques bot the way the question of caste was given resolution and the way the Dalit sub ject is represented in the literary imaginations of modern Tamil literature He points out that the entire field of literature is overwhelmingly male, wit writers belonging particularly to Brahmin and vellala castes (a cluster of caste who own large tracts of fertile land and continue to dominate the sphere o literature as well). He identifies certain patterns of representation by whic Dalit characters are portrayed in modern Tamil literature, particularly one that reinforce the hegemony of Brahmins and vellalas: redeeming the wretch ed "untouchable"; highlighting the lowliness of "untouchables" and the gen erosity of "upper castes"; establishing the rebellious and progressive nature o "upper castes" by showing them eating at "untouchable" locations; associatin "untouchables" with lowliness, evil, and sin; expressing anxieties about "un touchables" converting to Islam and Christianity; evoking a certain jouissanc among the readers by graphic descriptions of violence that "untouchables" en dure; representing "untouchables" as cheap laborers and slaves; and resolvin the liberation of "untouchables" necessarily within the Hindu religion. In th interest of carving out a niche within Tamil literary history and underscorin the rupture occasioned by the emergence of Dalit literature, Gowthaman also launches an ideological critique of what has been understood as Marxist and Dravidian literature in Tamil. In his view, in Marxist works that writers largely functioning within the folds of Communist parties produce, "untouchables" appear as agricultural classes and the politics of class is centralized. Economy is given primacy over culture in the call for industrial and agricultural laborers to unite to undermine caste. Much of leftist literature has been aesthetically structured within the style of social realism. According to Gowthaman, the

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Dalit question dissolves into the Marxist question in the literary experiments of leftist writers whose stories were structured around labor unions, red flags, and wage increases. Unlike Marxist literature, Dravidian literature has a better understanding about caste and culture. In certain ways Gowthaman also suggests that Dalit literature is a move away from the realist writing that emerges in modern Tamil literature and toward postmodern aesthetics (*Poi* 60).

The questions and answers that appear in *Elakku* as detailed above are significant in two ways. First, they point out that "What is Tamil Dalit literature?" and "What are the aesthetics of Tamil Dalit literature?" are not purely abstract questions, nor can they be resolved within the domain of literary theory. Rather, they show that the issue is more historical and inseparable from both the emergence of the Dalit writer as well as the conditions for that possibility. Second, those questions continue to recur even now and have been met with several differing explanations from Dalit critics. Most of the subsequent concerns regarding Dalit criticism have been indirect responses to those questions and answers that *Elakku* poses. Broadly speaking, Sivasankaran and Gowthaman contest the historical trajectories of Tamil Dalit literature. The contestation in certain ways is also about what Dalit literature is, what it constitutes, and what the conditions are for its emergence.

While Gowthaman's synchronic account rightly recognizes Dalit literature as a rupture in Tamil literary history, it fails to account for the presence of Dalit writers who existed before the 1990s and presents Dalit literature as an outcome of the state's policy measures and subsequent consciousness among Dalits. In addition, it is difficult to demonstrate that the rise of Dalit writers within the Tamil literary world has completely transformed the ways in which Dalit characters have been portrayed. Indeed, Dharman's critique builds up to this provocative statement about Dalit characters in Dalit literature: "The Dalit images/portrayals that have been shown so far remain one dimensional—men in stinking dirty cloths, women who easily fall, illiterates, violence maniacs, submissive coolies, ones who protest only for food and wages, etc." (25). That is to say, the characterization of Dalits by Dalits is not wholesale transformation, as Gowthaman wishes; rather, similar portrayals continue to exist even within the narratives Dalit writers produce. On the other hand, Sivasankaran misrecognizes the new developments as if Dalit literature is very much inscribed in the old order.[7] In many ways this misrecognition also reveals certain "upper caste" anxieties about the emergence of Dalit writers into the literary world and the way established writers cope with these new developments.

In the final analysis, it is clear in the discussions around Tamil Dalit literature that most often every opposition posed between aesthetics and politics,

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synchronicity and diachronicity in literary history, and the Dalit writer as a ontological and epistemological subject in literary theory, seems to be false i a way that the characteristics of one pole are inherently present in the othe pole of the opposition. That is to say, aesthetics cannot be separated fro politics, neither can synchronicity from the diachronic, nor can Dalit subje tivity be fully defined in terms of epistemology or ontology. While these a the theoretical problems that emerge in discussing "Tamil Dalit literature," historically speaking, "Dalit" in Dalit literature has largely been understoo in ontological terms and stated explicitly.

The idea that the writing subject determines the peculiarity of literatur posits the definitional problem (what is literature?) in terms of ontology. Thi question seems only to complicate the issue in new ways. The first reason fo this is that the category "Dalit" does not quite fit with the logic of ontolog since it is a political and historical category, not an ontological one. Ontolo gies, in a way, negate both historical and political formulations and forma tions. Ontology assumes the subject is always already there. The second rea son there cannot be any such thing as Dalit literature in ontological terms is a corollary to the first. One has to consider what has been inadequately formu lated as "subcaste issues" within Dalit discourse. It is precisely the ontologi cal determination that has produced a crisis within the field of Tamil Dali literature.[8]

It is also worthwhile to look at how Dalit studies as a discipline or an area of critical enquiry is largely understood as different from Dalit literature. I seems that an association with a life narrative and the emphasis on the place of the experiencing subject tends to give a different meaning to the categor of Dalit literature. Dalit studies, on the other hand, is received largely as a field of inquiry, and what has been expected is a scholarly intervention on not only caste experienced by "untouchables" but on general issues of all kinds Thus, Dalit life narratives seem to have been central in Dalit literature. This is perhaps why life narratives such as Bama's have played such an important role in the constitution of the category "Dalit literature." However, Dalit life nar ratives are only one among many contingencies that have constituted Dalit literature. Life narratives can neither be an exemplary case for Dalit literature nor can they be considered as exhausting the aesthetics and politics of Dalit literature, despite the historical role they played in constituting the field.

NOTES

1. All the translations from Tamil are mine unless otherwise noted.
2. In another context, a similar problem has been identified by Mathivannan in his re view of Perumal Murugan's *Koolamadari*, published in 2001. Mathivannan notes that

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Murugan's narrative uses names that are not socially respectful for the Arunthathiar characters, while largely the names of landowning Goundar caste children were given respectable names. Unlike Bama's work, here the difference is between names of people who belong to two different castes.

3. M. S. S. Pandian, for instance, has suggested that *Karukku* displaces the autobiographical "I" with the collectivity of a Dalit community ("On" 130). Kumar extends Pandian's idea and asserts that the invocation of a collective self is a strategy that almost all Dalit autobiographies adopted (232).

4. A few subjects within the narrative show a knowledge of Ambedkar and equality but still lack the full consciousness of the narrator.

5. While Bama's narrative in *Karukku* distances itself from the community members and presents her as a rational political subject, on occasion, the entry of the other "untouchable" castes into the narrative shows a certain shift in Bama's strategy, whereby her narrative erases the gap between herself and her community by relocating the irrational outside her community and placing it on the other community of "untouchables."

6. Laxman Mane, author of the Marathi autobiography *Upara* (Outsider), asks this question: "Can the enlightened people of our society who have appreciated *Upara* and its author come out in the open, breaking social barriers and joining hands with the hundreds of 'Uparas' who have no houses, no shelter and who live like animals?" (12).

7. There are also attempts by scholars to trace the presence of Dalits from the sixth century in epics (Swaminathan). While it is true that the names (here "Dalit literature") have a retroactive effect, it is historically inaccurate to locate certain mythologies and epics as Dalit literature. This diachronicity conceals certain conservative ideological interests to disavow anything that is new and to impose a seamless continuity across history.

8. Dalit, a non-Tamil term, found difficulty in gaining easy acceptance in the Tamil vernacular publics. Gowthaman suggests in one of his papers published by IDEAS in 1991 that "instead of Dalit, the term from an alien language, the derogative term 'Parayan' that is pervasive in Tamil usage to refer to untouchables, could be used" ("Thamilaga" 27n2). It is common knowledge that "Parayan" is a term used to refer to a particular caste rather than a term that could fairly represent the oppressed groups in Tamil Nadu. Though his suggestion is to remedy the usage of an "alien term," it unmistakably opens up a new problem regarding how a particular caste name could replace a term that is essentially anticaste. The term "Dalit" in its initial manifestations in Marathi and in the secondary appropriations in many non-Marathi languages never connoted a reference to caste and was popularized to emphasize the existential possibilities of the anticaste subject and the rejection of the caste order. However, Gowthaman's suggestion would get actualized not in terms of "Parayan/Paraya" formally gaining currency over "Dalit" but in a much more substantial way by which "Dalit," at least in the cultural and literary domain, largely came to denote the Paraya caste. Dalit activities of writing, performing arts, and politics in the 1990s resulted in rendering the two terms "Parayan" and "Dalit" as synonyms, and it resulted in non-Parayan "scheduled castes" disclaiming the name Dalit.

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BENDING BIOGRAPHY

THE CREATIVE INTRUSIONS OF "REAL LIVES" IN DALIT FICTION

LAURA R. BRUECK

This essay interrogates two contemporary literary negotiations of the twentieth-century biographies of M. K. Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar, and Dhanpat Rai Srivastava, better known as the towering icon of modern Hindi literature, "Munshi" Premchand, as well as the broader politics of their twenty-first-century resurrection and reevaluation. I focus on the writings of Uday Prakash and Ajay Navaria, both contemporary Delhi-based Hindi-language authors who write about the dynamics of caste in contemporary India,[1] to consider each author's innovative usages of metafictional narrative techniques to blur the boundaries between "real" and fictional life narratives. I argue that reading these texts through the critical lens of postrealism allows us to understand them as signaling new opportunities for Dalit writers to "challenge conventional forms of fiction and history through . . . an acknowledgment of their inescapable textuality" by reconstituting, *with a difference*, biographical narratives from "real life," as well as history and literature (Hutcheon 129). I suggest that a postrealist turn in Dalit literature provides some relief for the seemingly intractable debates over identity politics that continually inhibit the free movement of Dalit knowledge production, both literary and historical.[2] Ultimately, this paper probes the apparently arbitrary generic distinctions between auto/biography and fiction in Dalit narratives with a careful analysis of the strategically interventionist employment of real lives and biographical details in Dalit fiction.

I explore the narrative strategy of reemplotment in the following discussion as a key component of the critical stance of postrealism in two short stories—both of which variously seek to reconstitute new meanings for the historically embodied signifiers of Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Premchand. I argue that such an analysis of literary strategies, rather than the politics of authorial biographies, allows us to set aside for a moment the strained identity politics

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peculiar to the Dalit literary movement, about which I say more below usin a contemporary example, and consider the innovative narratives of Navari and Prakash together for the fact of their mutual preoccupation with cas and Dalitness, irrespective of their own individual claims to Dalit or no Dalit caste status.

In recent years, scholarship on Dalit literature (simplistically but perha most commonly defined as anticaste literature produced by authors who b long to—or for some, stand in solidarity with—India's former "untouchable castes) has eschewed the more traditional celebration of the intervention the "authentic" voice of experience associated with autobiographical—o testimonial—writing, focusing instead on the narrative strategies of Dalit fi tion (Gajarawala; Brueck). In these works, both realism and modernism ha rightly emerged as the defining critical frameworks for understanding Da literature in the context of the Ambedkarite social movement in which it embedded, as well as in its ties to a more diverse modern Indian literary her tage. This paper seeks to extend these frameworks to contend with a newe more postmodern Dalit literary trend exemplified by two recent works i Hindi by contemporary Delhi-based authors Ajay Navaria ("Uttar Katha," story I have translated elsewhere as "Hello Premchand!") and Uday Prakas ("Mohandas"). Using the critical lens of "historiographic metafiction" th Linda Hutcheon developed in her seminal book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, I argue that the reconstitution in these stories, beyon the temporal limits of their own historical context, of such iconic figures a Gandhi, Ambedkar, and the Hindi literary giant Premchand establishes a important literary shift toward postrealism. I advocate here for the productiv possibilities in a turn to postrealism in Dalit literature *as* literary criticism an historical revisionism. Such a turn allows for a framework in which we ca recognize the intersecting demands that Dalit literary aesthetics and certai meta-historically constituted Dalit subjectivities place upon dominant under standings of caste society.

As Toral Gajarawala has succinctly pointed out, "in Hindi especially, th central question in Dalit literature revolves around issues of realism, the rea and the cult of authenticity" (2). I have written extensively elsewhere abou the ways in which Dalit *chetna*, or a Dalit consciousness, which we might de fine as a kind of politicized awareness and anticasteism in the Ambedkarit mode, has emerged in Hindi-language Dalit literary critical discourse as th benchmark qualification for the critical embrace of a Dalit literary work The concept of Dalit *chetna* in Dalit literary critical discourse developed i the margins of Hindi literary realism, which was inaugurated, as many hav pointed out, with Premchand. It was none other than Premchand, a leadin

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figure of the progressive Hindi-Urdu literary movement of the 1920s and 1930s that wedded literary narrative to the ideology of the nationalist movement, who introduced the subject of the peasant, "the basis of a literary trope that would endure throughout the twentieth-century literary canon" (Gajarawala 33). But as Gajarawala points out, Premchand and the realist literary movement he inspired animated through their stories a social discourse of *sympathy*, and it is this affective result of literary realism that contemporary Dalit writers resist. Gajarawala writes:

> Why, says the Dalit critic, weren't Dalits represented by Premchand not only as they are but also as they might be? . . . Sympathy, as a narrative channel helped to produce the literary Dalit, but more importantly a literary type with limited potentiality. Types have socio-cultural longevity as well as political implications that are more clearly real than realism. The radical gesture of the Dalit literary movement is its refusal of a sympathetic discourse that has been central to a progressive realism—and, in fact, to unearth sympathy as the faulty affective architecture via which the old mode of realism was deemed progressive at all. (67)

The "affective architecture" of sympathy that realist literature in Hindi has traditionally constructed might also be understood as an aesthetic of detachment. Readerly sympathy is enabled by this detachment, such that a reader can feel *sorry* for an exploited Dalit protagonist rather than feel personally implicated in the social system of exploitation itself. Said another way, a reader can engage emotionally but not politically with the literary object of sympathy.[3] It is the detachment enabled by the sympathetic narratives of progressivist realism that angers Dalit critics and inspires them to construct a new politics of writing and reading: the politics of Dalit *chetna*.[4] Central to this new politics of Dalit *chetna* are the lives—as they were lived, as they are written, and as they circulate—of prominent historical figures in the politics of caste in India. In the following section, I consider for a moment a recent debate over the literary and political "lives" of Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Ambedkar's most notorious critique of caste society: *Annihilation of Caste*, written as a speech for the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal in 1936.[5] Though Ambedkar was not allowed to deliver it, the speech has circulated widely in numerous print publications ever since and become one of the most important texts of the Dalit movement in India. This twenty-first-century debate exemplifies the fraught negotiations over the lives and life writing of prominent twentieth-century Indian politicians, intellectuals, and artists and provides an important context to the detached aesthetic of sympathy that Dalit writers claim realism enables and into which Navaria and Prakash intervene with innovative experimentations in postrealism.

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READING AND WRITING LIVES: THE POLITICS OF *ANNIHILATION OF CASTE*

"When I first read it I felt as though somebody had walked into a dim roo and opened the windows. Reading Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar bridge the gap between what most Indians are schooled to believe in and the rea ity we experience every day of our lives" (Roy 17). So writes Arundhati Ro in "The Doctor and the Saint," her lengthy introduction to *Annihilation Caste*, one of the most famous works by B. R. Ambedkar, perhaps India most significant social and political reformer of the twentieth century. Orig nally written as a speech in 1936 but never delivered to its intended audienc of Hindu reformists who caught wind of its radical message, Ambedkar's vig orous critique of caste in *Annihilation of Caste* has gone on to become one the most widely printed and circulated books in India and now includes doz ens of editions available freely on the Internet. At the Delhi launch of the ne volume in the spring of 2014, S. Anand, the text's editor and publisher, sai that the book had the "curious distinction of being one of the most obscur as well as one of the most widely-read books in India." This is because whil the book is virtually sacred (however they might eschew such a religiously loaded term) for many in India's vast Dalit demographic, the privileged caste have exercised and protected their privilege by not reading it and willfully no taking into account its careful deconstruction of the very philosophical an political frameworks that consolidate their privilege.

The republication of *Annihilation of Caste* by the anticaste publishing house Navayana, and the strategic choice of the internationally recognizabl author and activist Arundhati Roy to write its introduction was meant to re urrect the historical figure of Ambedkar for a new audience: elites in Indi and beyond for whom Gandhi's legacy nearly swallows Ambedkar's whole. I her introduction, Roy admits that before the publisher's invitation she, too like so many other members of the "privileged castes," had never read th book. According to Roy,

> History has been kind to Gandhi. He was deified by millions of people in his own lifetime. Gandhi's godliness has become a universal and, so it seems, an eternal phenomenon. It's not just that the metaphor has outstripped the man. It has entirely reinvented him. (Which is why a critique of Gandhi need not automatically be taken to be a criticism of all Gandhians.) Gandhi has become all things to all people. . . . History has been unkind to Ambedkar. First it contained him, then it glorified him. It has made him India's Leader of the Untouchables, the King of the Ghetto. It has hidden away his writings. It has stripped away the radical intellect and the searing insolence. (40, 43)

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The irrefutable centrality of an idealized Gandhian biography in India's contemporary self-assessment is evident: take for example the poll by *Outlook India* in 2012 calling for votes for "The Greatest Indian *after Gandhi*" (the winner was none other than Ambedkar) or historian Ramachandra Guha's mammoth history of postcolonial India titled *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*. Nonetheless, Anand's and Roy's much publicized resurrection of Ambedkar, couched as it is in Roy's lengthy and deeply critical revision of Gandhi's popularly vaunted biography, was one that many among the text's "old" audience, its Dalit audience, has vociferously criticized in social and mainstream media sources. Their critique has to do with Roy's principal attention to deconstructing the global icon of Gandhi as "Mahatma" (great soul) with a specific critique of his attitudes on race during his time in South Africa and his conservative approach to caste when he returned to India in lieu of any deep engagement with Ambedkar's text. On December 16, 2014, Murali Shanmugavelan wrote in London's *The Independent* about Roy's lecture at a promotional event for the book at Columbia University:

> Her introduction, in fact, barely references the original text and mainly focuses on comparing Gandhi with Ambedkar, which seems to be the real purpose of the book. Roy, by her own admission, said at the launch at Columbia University that she had chosen not to publish her text as a stand-alone book, because she is . . . "pretty sure it would have been banned or disappeared in some ways. So it was a bit of a Trojan horse operation."

In other words, by her own admission it seems Roy yoked a *new* biography of Gandhi to an *old* iconic text by his political rival in order to provide her own work legitimacy and publishability. Implicit in Shanmugavelan's critique is a weariness in the face of yet another instance wherein Gandhi overshadows Ambedkar and a member of the "upper castes" (Roy, and also Anand, who annotated Ambedkar's text) overshadows an unnamed Dalit who might have been chosen to introduce the version of the text meant to bring Ambedkar and his writings to the world but is present only in his conspicuous absence and the angry cries of Dalit critics after the publication of the volume.

A particularly vocal critic in the debate that followed the book's publication was Anoop Kumar, founder of the Delhi-based Insight Foundation and regular contributor to *Round Table India*, a prominent online media platform for raising consciousness about Dalit issues. Comments from his Facebook page, later compiled on *Round Table India* in an essay called "Resisting a Messiah," included: "You need Omprakash [V]almiki's *Joothan's* English version to know the caste horror. Need *Fandry* to get shocked. You require 60–70 years to discover Ambedkar. You also need your own high priestess to

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now interpret Ambedkar for you. To tell you what was right and wrong wi Ambedkar. To force you to even start reading him. How long will this go man, just how long!"[6] Kumar here excoriates a non-Dalit audience who e gages with Dalit voices and politics through "mediated" forms such as tra lations and films and who ostensibly don't or won't read Ambedkar until member of their own ranks—here, Roy—urges them to. Later, in an addre to a conference at the University of Mumbai called "The Collective Dilem of Left, Right, and Centre: What to Do with Ambedkar?" also published *Round Table India*, Kumar continues,

> My question was about this whole narrative that was being built around this book; "Ambedkar needs an introduction. Ambedkar needs to go west. The upper caste people need to engage with Ambedkar and that is why Arundhati Roy has to write this." That was the narrative being sold to us and that is what we are challenging. What I need to know first is what stopped Ambedkar from getting introduced until now? Dalits have been fighting for Ambedkar, carrying him all their lives. Why isn't he *already* a part of your academic or media discourses?

For Dalit thinkers like Kumar, the supposed "elevation" of Dalit literatu to the status of world literature is not only irrelevant, it's an affront. This because, as David Damrosch has explained, world literature is not a set ca on of texts but what he calls instead "a mode of reading: a form of detach engagement with worlds beyond our own (read: Euro-American) place a time" (281). It is this detachment that is so troubling for many Dalit write and thinkers, for Dalit literature demands anything *but* detachment; it is call instead for political engagement and social revolution. What Dalit liter ture teaches us is that it is not only an impossibility but an *unethical* readi practice to engage merely in a "detached" way because this detached readi is an affront and a usurpation of both Dalit pain—from which their liter ture is born, according to their own critical frameworks—and, in the case Ambedkar, the very specific labor of producing and disseminating *Annihil tion of Caste*, for the masses, yes, but not for the world. In the discussion th follows I explore the ways in which both Prakash and Navaria critique th sympathetic aesthetic of detachment in their fiction by cannily manipulati and reemploting the "real life" biographies of Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Prem chand, illustrating the critical possibilities of Dalit literature to represent n only in a realist way the lives of Dalits in India, but also to renegotiate th contemporary understanding of historical, political, and literary giants.

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THE POLITICS OF "REAL LIVES" IN DALIT FICTION

Hutcheon seeks to define postmodern narrative practice, considering "issues such as those of narrative form, of intertextuality, of strategies of representation, of the role of language, of the relation between historical fact and experiential event, and, in general, of the epistemological and ontological consequences of the act of rendering problematic what was once taken for granted by historiography—and literature" (xii). She seeks the places where literature and history overlap, and the explicit engagement with the constructed nature of both, to develop her understanding of "historiographic metafiction," which she argues manifests both thematically and formally for an ultimately ethical reevaluation of historical truth. She writes, "Postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (110). And further, "Postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context" (118). In the cases of Prakash and Navaria and the ethical imperatives of their Dalit narratives, the desire is also to develop a new (or we might also say, Ambedkarite) perspective that questions the certainties of popular historical understanding—the hitherto unquestioned greatness of Gandhi, for example.

According to Eileen Williams-Wanquet, a scholar of British literature who has built on Hutcheon's conception of historiographic metafiction to understand postrealism as a particular narrative approach within a broader postmodern ideological context, if realist literature aims for the truthful representation of an external reality and if a postmodern text eschews realism to create its own reality, untethered to the truth of experience, then the postrealist text—situated between the others—"re-emplots facts that have been severed from the world, only to send them back to the world with new meaning" (393). She writes:

> As it attempts to find a new way of conveying the world, the "postrealist" novel of postmodernity incorporates historical characters and events (Hutcheon's "historiographic metafiction"), as well as characters and events from earlier fiction (Hutcheon's "modern parody"). . . . Postrealist texts tend to privilege intertextual parody, reproducing various texts with a difference. (392)

The following discussions of Uday Prakash's "Mohandas" and Ajay Navaria's "Hello, Premchand!" will illuminate the ways that both employ various postrealist and metafictional narrative strategies, creatively manipulating the intertexts of the biographical traces of three of the most significant interlocutors

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of the modern experience and politics of caste in India: M. K. Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar, and "Munshi" Premchand.

"MOHANDAS"

In 2005, the prolific Hindi novelist and short story writer Uday Prakash published a short novella called "Mohandas" in the monthly magazine *Hans*, the premier Hindi literary magazine in India and the world.[7] The issue in which he published the story was dedicated to the literary legacy of Munshi Premchand, the founding editor of *Hans* in 1930, and an icon of Indian letters in the twentieth century who wrote primarily in Hindi (but also sometimes in Urdu) and ushered in a new realist aesthetic into Hindi-Urdu prose with special attention to the material conditions of life as a rural, poor, and sometimes also "low caste" Indian.[8] Prakash's story does indeed echo Premchand strongly in its theme of an educationally and spiritually rich but economically poor "low caste" protagonist, outwitted and undone by the malevolent forces of casteist hierarchies and bureaucratic corruption. The narrator of Prakash's story is self-conscious about the specter of Premchand, whose thematic and stylistic traces color this new story and addresses the reader mid-story in the following metafictional aside:

> Let's stop here for a minute. I bet you're thinking that I'm taking advantage of the one hundred and twenty fifth anniversary of the birth of Premchand, the King of Hindi Fiction, to spin you some hundred-and-twenty-five-year-old story dressed up as a tale of today. But the truth is that the account I am putting before you, in its old and backward style, manner, and language, is a tale of a time right after 9/11, in the aftermath of the collapse of the World Trade Center in New York; a time when two sovereign Asian nations were reduced to ash and rubble. (68–69)[9]

The contemporary story of "a time right after 9/11" (and yet easily mistaken for a tale from another era) is of a man named Mohandas, poor and Dalit from a village in Chattisgarh but educated and hopeful and eligible for a public-sector job reserved for "Untouchables" like him. Yet he struggles to find a job as each new opportunity falls to nepotism, bribery, and other forms of corruption. When he finally secures a job at a mining company, a scheming Brahmin steals Mohandas's name, caste, and educational certificates and takes the job for himself, leaving Mohandas in a downward spiral of poverty and hopelessness without even the security of his identity. The struggle to reclaim his identity is tortuous and ultimately unsuccessful despite the support of a precious few: lawyers and judges and well-wishers, all of whom Prakash names after other important authors of twentieth-century Hindi fiction.

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In addition to Premchand's animating traces—evident in the venue of the story's publication (the Premchand anniversary issue), the themes and literary style of the story, and the narrator's aside—the ghost of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi also haunts the story, evident in the name of the protagonist and members of his family. Once again, the narrator simultaneously acknowledges and denies the story's resurrection of Gandhi in the author's second parenthetical "aside"—its status as marginalia to the story belied by its length at nearly a page and a half:

> (Please stop for a moment and tell the truth: did you begin to get the feeling that I'd gone and started telling you some kind of encoded, symbol-laden tale? The main character of the story is called Mohandas, the wife is Kasturibai, the mother is Putlibai and the son's name is Devdas . . . ?
>
> Kasturibai reminds you of Kasturba—and, well, Mohandas couldn't be more clear. If you read Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography, also known as *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, you'll discover that his father, Karamchand, was also called Kaba. And his mother was Putlibai . . . and who doesn't know the tale of his son, Devdas? Look at Mohandas, his build, and the state he's in: he shares the same history as the Mahatma. The difference is that Mohandas looks the way he does not because of Porbandar—the place where Gandhi was born—or Kathiawar, Rajkot, England, South Africa, or Birla House, but as a result of the hunger and heat, sweat and sickness, insult and injustice in the fields and pastures, caverns and caves, jungles and marshes, of Chhattisgarh and Vindhya Pradesh. Otherwise, the rest is all the same. . . .
>
> You'll have to take my word, and don't read too much into it. It isn't some symbolic story or allegory or coded fable. It's totally on the level. Though, truth be told, it's not really a story. As I'm wont to do, I wind up detailing the real life of a real person—someone alive now, living among us in our society—concealing it behind the veil of a story. Mohandas is a living, breathing human being . . . Mohandas is real. If you'd like to verify this, you can do so by asking any inhabitant of our village, or any other village in this country.) (50–51)

This passage is emblematic of the self-conscious metafictional engagement of the narrator with his audience throughout Prakash's story, as well as a sustained play on narrative genre such that Prakash challenges our expectations of realism, metaphor, and allegory. He underscores the "reality" of his *kahaani* (story), a modern genre, and scoffs at our implied assumption that this belongs to the "older" forms of *prateek kathaa* (symbolic narrative), *rupak* (allegory), or *kootakhyaan* (symbolic fable). Instead, Prakash writes in the original Hindi version, "*Yeh to ek bilkul sapaat-sa kissa hai*" (this is a plain and simple story). And in the next breath, "*Balki sach to yeh hai ki yeh kissa bhi nahin hain*" (but the truth is this isn't really a story at all) (12).[10] Because, he writes, "*Mohandas ek asliyat hai*" (Mohandas is a reality) (12).[11] He is a "real"

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man whose neighbor stole his identity and ruined his life. But again, a be later, Prakash challenges us to ask "*hamaare gaon ki nahi, is desh ke kisi bh gaon ke kisi bhi vashinde se*" (any inhabitant of our village, or any other villa in this country), forcing us right back into the terrain of the *kootakhyaan*, th *pratheek katha*, or the *rupak*—symbolic, metaphorical modes of narration a (12).

Such a playful destabilization of generic expectations and the sudde shifting of the narrative ground beneath the reader's feet by an overtly con trolling narrator who problematizes the subjectivities of both the Gandhi history (marked by the intertextual evocation of Gandhi's autobiography, *M Experiments with Truth*) and the Mohandas of the story suggests but refuse to confirm parallels between the two, which is consistent with postmoder ism's critique of reality. Yet, unlike many postmodernist practitioners, Praka is not interested in challenging the foundations of "reality" in his story bu rather demands that we take a closer look at the artifice of socially determina tive categories such as caste and class to recognize the reality of marginaliza tion and exploitation in "any village" in India. But to convey this reality i its starkest terms Prakash relies not only on "realistic" description and deta but makes effective use of metaphor, symbol, and allegory. He skewers Prem chand's realism even as he pays it homage, and simultaneously resurrects—a did Roy in her introduction to *Annihilation of Caste*—the historical figure o Mahatma Gandhi, reemplotting Gandhi's biography in a story that excoriate the very foundation of Gandhi's moralistic authority: his assertion that th soul of India resides in its villages. According to Alessandra Consolaro's analy sis of "Mohandas," "This Dalit avatar of Gandhi finds himself again and agai in a helpless situation, yet not even a single Gandhian activist or organizatio is made available in the story to help him . . . the text makes no allowance fo any sympathetic argument about whatever is left of the Gandhian project i the contemporary world" (10).

Hutcheon has pointed to "a formal marking of historicity—both literar and worldly" as constitutive of what she terms historiographic metafiction, kind of writing that at once grounds itself in the world while simultaneousl "querying the very basis of the authority of that grounding" (5). She writes "The intertextual parody of historiographic metafiction . . . offers a sense o the presence of the past, but this is a past that can only be known from it texts, its traces—be they literary or historical" (4). Both Roy and Prakash— in different ways in their respective texts—resurrect from historical traces th figure of Gandhi and the significant symbolic weight that his memory wield in India to destabilize the meanings of equality and independence and a ethical nationalism that have coalesced around him as a historical figure b

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offering two "real" alternatives to Gandhi himself: Ambedkar as a man with a more radical message of social equality and the character Mohandas as Gandhi's doppelgänger, brought to ruin by the failure of Gandhian idealism. As I have noted, Williams-Wanquet has described this practice of grounding a contemporary text in both an empirical past and a literary one as postrealist narrative: one that is neither fully mimetic (aiming to recreate "reality") nor postmodern (creating its own autonomous reality) but rather a narrative practice that "re-emplots facts that have been severed from the world, only to send them back into the world with new meaning" (393). The next thing we must ask is if a past can only be known from its texts, and if contemporary texts can intervene to rewrite or reemplot those texts from the past, can we in fact rewrite the past—if not empirical, then at least literary—itself? Williams-Wanquet continues, "Historiographic metafiction shows fiction to be historically conditioned and history to be discursively structured, and in the process manages to broaden the debate about the ideological implications of the Foucauldian conjunction of power and knowledge—for readers and for history itself as a discipline" (392). In the case of Prakash's story and also in empirical reality, as the metatextual attestations to the "reality" of Mohandas make clear, Mohandas might have otherwise been "lost to history" by way of his stolen identity and caste, class, and geographically based marginalization. It is only through narrative/fictionalized resurrection as *Gandhi* that Mohandas's story is recorded as history, and that Gandhi's legacy is rewritten, and reduced, in the present.

"HELLO, PREMCHAND!"

The possibility of the postrealist rewriting of reality through historiographic metatextual play is addressed even more unabashedly in the 2009 story "Uttar Katha," by Ajay Navaria. *Uttar katha* literally means the story that serves as an answer or a response, but in order to avoid the inelegance of this phrase in English as well as to recognize the historical figure to whom Navaria is in fact responding, I translated the story with the title, "Hello, Premchand!" in *Unclaimed Terrain*. Navaria here creates a frame story in which the ghosts or specters or unnamed people who at first only "look like" Premchand and Ambedkar emerge out of historical sync and appear to a young typist, asking him to type up their new manuscripts. Inside this frame, in the story that the man who "looks like Premchand" asks the typist to type, Navaria principally retells the story of Mangal—engaging in a parodic retelling of the tale of the pitiable protagonist in one of Premchand's more famous short stories, "Dudh ka Dam" (The Price of Milk, first published in 1910) while also referencing and rewriting the fates of several of Premchand's Dalit characters from his

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other stories. In this savvy and literarily reflective story-within-a-story, a ty
ist meets the specters of both Premchand and Ambedkar and types a story t
Premchand look-alike presents to him that is meant as a "responding sto
(*uttar katha*) to Premchand's "Dudh ka Dam." In Navaria's story, the Pre
chand look-alike "responds" to a single line quoted from "Dudh ka Da
"whatever else may change in this world, Bhangis [sweepers] will always
main Bhangis" (125). But in this rewritten version of the famous Premcha
story, written in a sympathetically realist style about a Dalit boy who sha
with a stray dog table scraps from an "upper caste" house for his dinner,
Bhangi does not in fact remain so; instead, he is educated, leaves his villa
becomes a government official, and returns to his village having succeeded
spite of his caste. This is a story enriched by its insight into the power of Da
writers to change the literary landscape Dalit characters have typically inha
ited. It is the point of view of the literary critic, fictionalized.

In Navaria's rewriting of Premchand's story, the orphan boy Mangal
buoyed by both his mother's dream that he should transcend his suppos
fate as a Bhangi and only do work that brings him respect, as well as a co
munity of relatives and teachers and well-wishers who encourage his ed
cation. A host of characters from Premchand's other famous "untouchabl
stories published in the 1930s—including Ghisu and Madhav from "Kafa
(The Shroud), Halku from "Pus ki Raat" (January Night), Gangi and Jokh
from "Thakur ka Kuaan" (The Thakur's Well), and Ghasiram from "Sadgat
(Deliverance)—make telling cameo appearances as well. All of these chara
ters are treated completely differently in Navaria's story than in Premchand
stories: unsympathetic "upper caste" characters in Premchand's stories b
come champions of Dalits in Navaria's narrative. Dalit characters consigne
to death or a hopeless existence in Premchand's stories are resurrected, ed
cated, and politicized in "Hello, Premchand!"

At the end of Navaria's story, Mangal travels back to his village, retur
ing as a respected government official to the place where his mother on
shoveled shit. The story is set in its peculiar postrealist frame (set off by th
action of "typing") in which a young typist meets the specters of both Prem
chand and Ambedkar, who give him rejoinders to the narratives of pity an
condescension and fetishization that have dominated literary representatio
of Dalits from Premchand to Roy. Premchand, in the postrealist reality thi
Navaria's narrative strategies of resurrection and reemplotment envision, re
places Gandhi with Ambedkar as his ideological inspiration and consequen
ly rewrites his most famously Gandhian stories on the subject of caste fro
an Ambedkarite perspective, while Ambedkar's writing is also influenced b
Premchand's stories. Navaria's story rewrites literary history and thus effe
tively recasts the supposed inevitability of caste identities in modern India:

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> It was a strange coincidence that as I finished typing, I met the gentleman [who looked like Premchand] again that same evening. This time he wasn't alone. There was another gentleman with him who looked just like Dr. Ambedkar. . . .
>
> "This great man is Dr. Ambedkar. Surely, you must recognize him?" The gentleman said, introducing the man next to him.
>
> "Babasaheb!" I lurched forward and grabbed his hand.
>
> "Here, read this! . . . After reading several of Premchandji's stories, I drew some conclusions. In 1941, I gave this speech at the annual meeting of the Bombay Municipal Worker's Union."
>
> "You have to read this with the story . . . this is the placenta and the umbilical cord. These come out at birth with the child." The gentleman who looked like Premchand patted my shoulders. "Come, let's sing together the national anthem of Independent India." He took my hand and walked ahead. (153–54)

In this extraordinary rewriting of history in the present, Navaria imagines a dialogue between Premchand and Ambedkar, and the kind of social and literary politics of political engagement and Dalit *chetna* that Premchand *might have had* had he been able to read Ambedkar (*Annhilation of Caste* was written in 1936, the same year that Premchand died). Navaria here not only rewrites Premchand's stories from the early decades of the twentieth century but actually resurrects the ghost of Premchand himself to do it, newly awake as he is (in Navaria's imagination) in Ambedkarite anticaste ideology. In other words, Navaria reimagines the historical exchange of ideas between the real-life figures of Gandhi, Premchand, and Ambedkar, and reemplots this exchange in the present, enabling a complete rewriting of literary history in light of a more radical and contemporary political understanding of caste and the power of fiction to produce new wrinkles in the fabric of the real. As Williams-Wanquet explains, "History is critically re-evaluated in the light of the present, by fictionally revisiting its textualized remains" (267). In the postrealist fiction of *both* Navaria and Prakash, the history that is being reevaluated is the literary history of Dalit representation itself, as well as the previously unassailable political legacy of Gandhian attitudes toward caste.

CONCLUSION

Various processes of reinvention have been at the heart of the contemporary Dalit movement from its inception. A case in point is wresting the very term "Dalit" from its context as a hateful epithet and investing in this term a new set of meanings to include a person with a politicized consciousness who rejects the narrative of inferiority on which he or she was raised and seeks a new, universal equality. According to Badri Narayan, a historian of the Dalit movement,

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> To fulfill the need for a past to suit their purpose, the social and historical meaning of the Dalit past is being re-created and reinvented. In this process, the past is intrinsically built into the present; it becomes the subject of present reflection and re-construction as a primary mechanism for changing the marginalized social position of Dalits. Thus, their past is one that helps in their ongoing struggle of carving out their future against an oppressive present, constructing an identity that grants them the self-respect to elevate themselves above their present, still largely socially degraded status. (171)

Such temporal shifting—and the uncanny renarration of historical lives from the past (Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Premchand in these stories, and in Roy's book, too, though to somewhat different effect due to the political exigencies of the present), who are then reemplotted in the "oppressive present" to point toward a more ideal future—proves a critical intervention in these recent examples of Hindi fiction about Dalits[12] that pushes Dalit literature out of its established realist and modernist frameworks, and their attendant modes of sympathetically detached reading, and toward new postmodern, postrealist possibilities.

NOTES

1. This focus is present in nearly everything Navaria has written, and for Uday Prakash in particular his novella *Pīli Chhatarī Wālī Laḍkī* and the stories collected in *The Walls of Delhi: Three Novellas*.
2. Ajay Navaria is a Dalit and a leading voice in the contemporary Hindi Dalit literary sphere. Uday Prakash, by contrast, is not a Dalit but engages nonetheless in a political critique of caste in the story I will analyze here as well as others. In conversation, he has explained to me his sense of isolation from the Dalit literary sphere since he does not share the same caste identity. Similarly, and also in conversation, Ajay Navaria is quick to name Uday Prakash as a major influence on his own writing.
3. For a more detailed discussion of the limitations of the language of sympathy in the context of representations of Dalits, see Gupta, *Gender*.
4. For examples see Valmiki's *Dalit* and Limbale.
5. For a more thorough discussion of the constitutive role of the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal in the twentieth-century discourse of caste, see Gupta, "Speaking Self," published in this same volume.
6. He refers here to the English translation, by Arun Prabha Mukherjee, of Valmiki's Hindi autobiography titled *Joothan*. *Fandry* is a 2013 Marathi-language film about young love reaching across caste divisions, directed by Nagraj Manjule.

   Another essay of the same name by Anoop Kumar appears in the 2015 publication *Hatred in the Belly* that does not include these comments, which can still be accessed at the *Round Table India* website.
7. In this paper I quote from Jason Grunebaum's excellent translation of Prakash's collection

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of stories titled *The Walls of Delhi*, with additional references to the original Hindi.

8. Premchand's best-known "untouchable" stories include "Kafan" (The Shroud), "Dudh ka Daam" (The Price of Milk), "Sadgati" (Deliverance), and "Thakur ka Kuaan" (The Thakhur's Well).

9. This nod toward twenty-first-century American imperialism as a marker of modernity is emulated in a different story by Ajay Navaria (who has often commented on Prakash's influence on his own writing). In the story "New Custom" in the collection *Unclaimed Terrain*, Navaria writes, "On the television set, an international channel was now showing pictures of Saddam Hussein. . . . America was making him an example to the world, issuing a warning" (74). In these metafictional details that nod toward contemporary events, both Prakash and Navaria point out the irony of the existence of feudalistic caste oppression in a modern, globalized world, while also making a parallel commentary on power and its abuses by the powerful.

10. Here I provide a more literal translation of the Hindi than Grunebaum's literary one quoted previously. I am analyzing the sudden shift of narrative ground between what is "real" and what is "fiction," and I want to make the narrative mechanics of that clear.

11. Mohandas's status as "real" is also underscored in the paratext of this translation by Grunebaum's own afterword, in which he describes his trip with Prakash to his home state of Chhattisgarh: "I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised that as we were leaving town, Prakash, seeing a man on the road walking toward us, said, 'Oh, there's Mohandas.' And so it was: the man who he had based his character on, looking just as haggard and resilient as described in the story. We stopped, spoke at length, took some photos, and went on" (223–24).

12. I say this instead of "Hindi Dalit Literature" again to acknowledge the fact that Uday Prakash is not a Dalit. However I hope by now, after this examination of the interplay of stylistics and narrative strategies in Navaria's and Prakash's works, that it is clear how "Dalit Literature," if defined by the caste identities of its authors, is an unsatisfying and restrictive category that in fact hinders us from engaging with the ways in which authors can creatively articulate a critique of caste. Without disavowing the political import of the intervention of Dalit voices in the literary sphere, this article may be read also as a case for a more expansive understanding of the category of Dalit literature.

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PERIYAR AS A BIOPIC
STAR PERSONA, HISTORICAL EVENTS, AND POLITICS

SWARNAVEL ESWARAN

What do we expect when we go to watch a biopic? In most cases, "a slice of history" would be the immediate response, which then leads to questions regarding the challenges of representing history through a (sometimes larger than life) protagonist and the balancing of the personal and the political or the domestic and the public. The biopic of Periyar E. V. Ramasami, the radical leader from South India, offers an ideal space for an interesting and absorbing narrative, as his life, both in the private and the public spheres, was consistently marked by provocative and subversive acts aimed at challenging the status quo of a highly conservative, religious, and casteist society through his championing the cause of *suyamariyathai*—"self-respect" for historically discriminated castes or *jathigal*. The challenges inherent in reducing sociopolitical complexities to a catalogue of dramatic events in the life of a radical leader are understandable. Nonetheless, and ironically, the biopic on Periyar's eventful life is dull and tedious. The lackluster quality of the film sheds light on the problems of depicting a leader of the masses through a star persona. A star persona has a different kind of mass appeal generated through a corpus of films that rely on the star as a commodity and as cultural capital. The status quo of the star himself, therefore, is at odds with the impulse toward anarchy that underlies the radicalism of a leader like Periyar. The dichotomy identified here begs a detailed interrogation of the manner in which key events are reenacted through the figure of the star.

This essay, therefore, engages with the biopic *Periyar* to analyze how history is represented through the life of one of the most significant revolutionary figures in Indian politics of the last century. It focuses on the representation of the key events in the life of Periyar, a honorific (meaning "great") conferred on E. V. Ramasami by Dalit women. Periyar E. V. Ramasami was a member of the Justice Party and the Congress Party before starting his own

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party, Dravidar Kazhagam (Federation of the Dravidians, hereafter referred to as DK), and the biopic retells his vibrant story through the persona of the leading star of Tamil cinema—Sathyaraj. Periyar was an unparalleled social reformer who fought relentlessly against caste and religion and for the equality of women and the downtrodden.[1] A detailed analysis of the narrativization of the life and times of such an iconic figure would shed light on sociopolitical history and also enhance our understanding of the way a biopic engages with the reenactments of historically significant moments. Periyar was a radical leader who tried to dismantle the rigid structures of caste hierarchy among the Hindus by challenging oppression in the name of religion and foregrounding the voices of the people in the peripheries and the fringes.

The biopic as a genre has often been criticized, particularly when it adopts the historical drama structure, because it simplifies the complexity of life into a narrative with a neat beginning, middle, and end (Rosenstone 123). As a genre, the biopic has also garnered critical attention relatively late—George Custen's book *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* was published only in 1992. Almost two decades later, Dennis Bingham's 2010 book *Whose Lives Are They Anyway: The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre*, as the title suggests, astutely argues that the biopic has come a long way through films like *Citizen Kane*, *The Karen Carpenter Story*, and *The Notorious Bettie Page*. From the days of the classical Hollywood idiom-driven biopics *The Story of Louis Pasteur* and *The Life of Emile Zola*, to the contemporary times of the postmodern biopic, such as *I'm Not There* with its self-reflexivity and parody the genre has broken new ground. It experiments with form and relates to an informed audience that gets more than its quota of linear, classical biopics from television (even as television also undermines the aura surrounding the celebrity through gossip, rumor, and talk and reality shows, and distances its viewers from unconditionally accepting naive hagiography as it might have in the past).

In the Indian context, too, the biopic has come a long way from *Dr. Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani* to films like *Bandit Queen*, *Bose: The Forgotten Hero*, *Gandhi: My Father*, *The Dirty Picture*, *Paan Singh Tomaar*, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, and *Mary Kom*. The recent interest of Indian audiences seems to be veering toward narratives of sports celebrities, as exemplified by the huge box-office success of the last three films listed. However, it is in the realm of the biographies of politicians (and their families), as in the case of *Gandhi: My Father*, that personae are deconstructed and stereotypical hagiography is challenged. In the context of *Periyar*, Shekar Kapoor's biopic on Phoolan Devi, *Bandit Queen* is a significant film, as Phoolan's revenge against the "upper caste" Rajputs is spurred by the unjust and violent oppression she has to endure as a woman belonging

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to a "lower caste." *Bandit Queen*'s narrative thus resonates with Periyar's simultaneous preoccupation with women's empowerment and the abolition of caste. Nevertheless, as a film, *Bandit Queen* substantially differs from *Periyar* in its realism-driven aesthetics, particularly in its disavowal of the typical song and action sequence of the popular *dakoo*/dacoit genre film. This is perhaps because it was produced by Britain's Channel 4 and, therefore, was made for a transnational audience, unlike *Periyar*, which primarily targeted the local audience in Tamilnadu. Seema Biswas, who was a relative newcomer with a background in theater, became a celebrity as she won the national award for her performance in/as *Bandit Queen*.[2] Usually, however, as we can see from the list of films above, the already established star or the actor who plays the protagonist in a classical biopic, as in the case of *Periyar*, becomes arguably as important as the director. This essay will, therefore, engage in detail with the Tamil star Sathyaraj's performance as the protagonist in *Periyar*.

As far as biopics in Tamil are concerned, the most popular ones have been films like *Veerpandiya Kattabomman* (Kattabomman, the Brave Warrior), which mainly drew from the legends surrounding a chieftain who challenged and fought against the British, and *Kappalottiya Thamizhan* (The Tamizhan Who Steered a Ship), which was again a narrative about a patriot who rebelled against the British. *Kappalottiya Thamizhan* was based on the biography of V. O. Chidamabram Pillai, written by Ma. Po. Sivagnanam, who was involved in politics as well as literature. The film was more of a melodrama, though it meticulously restaged some of the significant events during the British rule of India. There were also films like *Sivagangai Seemai* (The Border of Sivaganga), which focused on the lives of the Marudu brothers, who challenged British rule. Unlike *Veerapandiya Kattabomman*, *Sivagangai Seemai* was less spectacular; it pursued realism within its own fictive universe.

We must view *Periyar* through this Tamil cinematic context. The director of *Periyar*, Gnana Rajasekaran, had directed a biopic on the Tamil poet Bharathiyar, *Bharathi*, which was also episodic but focused mainly on Bharathiyar's politics as a rebel. For instance, Bharathiyar's investment in projects of translation and his spirituality as a poet were omitted to delineate issues surrounding caste and oppression. Unlike in *Periyar*, Rajasekaran elides certain key events and personalities in Bharathiyar's short life of thirty-eight years even if the narrative, through a flashback, covers his life from childhood onward. In *Periyar*, however, Rajasekaran is not able to make clear choices regarding the time periods he focuses on since he wants to engage with all the key moments in Periyar's life that were instrumental in changing the course of history in Tamilnadu. He strives to offer an insight into the radical politics of his humane protagonist by juxtaposing him with the casteism, religious

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beliefs, conservatism, and prejudices of Hindu majoritarian society. As a result, *Periyar* is a catalog of vignettes from Periyar's eventful life.

Rajasekaran comes from an unusual background: he is a retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer. The film, too, has an unusual history: it was mainly funded by the ruling government in Tamilnadu. Given this structure of funding, my essay also explores how financial support from the state has affected the film both in its narrative (in terms of the choice of sequences) and reception. Toward this end, my essay will consider the beginning—the first fifteen minutes of the film to be precise—wherein Sathyaraj plays the young Periyar, and the concluding scene where Karunanidhi is foregrounded as the chief minister. Then I will delve into the body of the film to discuss the representation of Periyar's interventions in the public sphere to spread his radical messages about social reform. The final segment of the essay will engage with Periyar's unconventional and provocative acts of radicalism and their representation in the film.

EPISODIC BIOPIC

Periyar narrates its subject's life from his youth until his death at the age of ninety-four in 1973. Because of this chronology, perhaps, the narrative is episodic in structure and struggles with a compilation model wherein every key event is showcased as a two- to four-minute scene. The first fifteen minutes give us an idea of the film's long and contrived structure: the film begins with an elderly man waking up the sleeping Ramasami (Sathyaraj) because his mother, Chinna Thayamma (Manorama), has been searching for him. As Ramasami reluctantly gets up and puts on his silk clothes and head gear and joins his mother, we see that she is busy in a puja. She interrogates the priest regarding the prospects of her son's marriage. When the priest says that the auspicious time has arrived, Ramasami, sitting near his mother, seeks her attention. He touches her on her shoulder, leading her to ask him if he has taken a bath. When he replies in the negative, she rushes off upset to remove the "impurity" by taking a bath again. Subsequently, a nonchalant Ramasami learns that the people standing around him and participating in the puja are all involved with astrology or palmistry; he plays a prank on the priest, who advises him regarding the rigid hands of destiny, by pulling down the cord that holds the wooden venetian blind. The heavy blind comes down on the head of the priest as Ramasami smiles. As Tamilinian points out in his blog, according to Periyar's biographer Sami Chidambaranar, this event occurred when Ramasami was twelve years old. The star Sathyaraj is manifestly too old for this prank scene. This opening scene, thus, sets the tone of the film: *Periyar* will take liberties with history in combining the personal—in this case, his

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background as hailing from an orthodox conservative Naicker family—and juxtaposing it with the political, his rebellion and challenging of the traditions predicated on superstition, religion, and most importantly caste/casteism.

In the next scene, an apparently bored Ramasami walks through the drawing room, where guests are busy in a feast, and moves toward priests chanting Sanskrit mantras, such as Vishnu Sahasranamam (the one thousand names of Lord Vishnu). This time it is his father, Venkata Naicker (Sathyanarayana), who is seated on a long chair in front of the chanting priests with closed eyes. The mischievous Ramasami pats the backs of the priests, who stop their chanting, and starts chanting his own (concocted) mantras. When his absorbed father opens his eyes and beamingly asks his apparently religious son, "Rama, how do you know these mantras?" Ramasami, making fun of his father's credulity, says, "Father, I've been listening to these from my childhood. . . . Besides, there are only ten or fifteen sentences, and one can easily concoct a version. . . . As you don't know the language, I get away with my fakery."[3] The angry father asks him to get out. This scene continues to portray Ramasami's humor before he gradually transforms into a more serious rebel and radical thinker. Periyar's subversive politics were characterized by always being in the public sphere and, therefore, humor was a useful tool to him in making people reflect on their own naivety and prejudices. While scenes like this help to gradually set up Periyar's skeptical character, as expressed through his laziness, bored reactions, and nonchalance, which is juxtaposed with humor, it also underscores Rajasekaran's objective of making a popular film on Periyar rather than an artistic or alternative film. The body language and mannerisms of popular actor Sathyaraj are retooled to reinvent a Periyar persona that could appeal to the regular Tamil filmgoer.

The song "Idai Thaluvi Kolla" (To Fondle My Waist) that follows not only appeals to a mass audience but also undermines our expectations of biopics insofar as it engages seriously with Periyar's radical views and provokes discussions among younger audiences. In fact, the lyrics, music, and choreography remind us of the songs of an earlier studio era where a seductive song by a courtesan was a highlight meant to draw in the audience both through the song and the dance and also by showcasing the studio interiors, production design, and lighting. Later in film history, the courtesan appearing in this typically fleeting scene evolved into a staple of Tamil cinema: the vamp or femme fatale. In *Periyar*, the narrative tries to validate the song situation by portraying a Ramasami disinterested in the dance and the women, and by underscoring his pragmatic sense in the way he calculates the income received by the musicians and the dancers to conclude that dancing for the feudal clientele is an unprofitable venture.

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This dance, performed by actress Ragasya, to the lyrics "*Idai thaluvi kolla / Jadai thadavi kolla / Zameen ezuthikkodu seemane*" (To fondle my waist / To stroke my braids / Grant me your land, O gentleman/landlord), recalls the popular song "O! Rasikkum Seemane" (Oh! Gentleman Spectator) from *Parasakthi* by invoking the *seeman* (gentleman). Here it is worth noting that *Parasakthi*'s dialogue was written by M. Karunanidhi, whom the film thanks in the initial credit titles. However, in *Parasakthi*, the artifice of the song is validated, as it is part of a sequence that reveals how the protagonist Gunasekaran is relieved of his money when he arrives in an independent India to participate in his younger sister Kalyani's marriage. R. Sudarsanam's music, M. S. Rajeswari's melodious voice, and Kumari Kamala's dance have made "O! Rasikkum Seemane" an iconic song of seduction in Tamil cinema's history, whereas the song in *Periyar* is unexceptional in its rendering on the screen. This song seems out of place in the narrative due to its lackluster quality. If the intention was to showcase Ramasami as a practical young man from a wealthy business family who, unlike his peers in the song, is not a philanderer, the notion does not come through effectively. The stereotypical song, then, illustrates that *Periyar* is an episodic biopic targeted at mainstream Tamil cinema audiences who expect customary features like item numbers. The song also prefigures the difficulty of navigating between the trenchant radical politics of a revolutionary figure and the box-office demands to keep the audience entertained through humor, song, and dance.

The first three sequences reveal the difficulty inherent in biopics of prioritizing and representing through anecdotes some of the key events in the protagonist's life. One could argue that *Periyar* is a tapestry of vignettes presenting dramatic moments in Periyar's life. On the one hand, it aspires to a smooth narration where one event seamlessly follows the other and, on the other hand, it wants to capture Periyar's interventions, which were ruptures in this apparent seamlessness and superficial coherence. For instance, in the above song-and-dance sequence where we see women soliciting men and the dancer seducing her wealthy clients, Ramasami's inquiry about the cost of the fruit and the fees paid to the women and the accompanying musicians for their services is uncomfortable for the viewer, mainly because of the banality surrounding the stereotypical song and its picturization. The sequence reminds us of M. Madhava Prasad's notion of assemblage in the context of popular Hindi cinema's "heterogeneous mode of production," wherein disparate parts that are produced in relative isolation are put together, and as exemplified by the song picturization—lyrics, music, choreography, and dance—in this sequence (42–45).

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The fourth sequence begins with the (child) marriage of Venkata Naicker's sister's daughter, Ammayi. When Ramasami affectionately invites his foster mother, sitting alone in the corner of an adjacent room, to participate in the wedding, she declines: "I should not participate in an auspicious event [like this]. You go [inside]." Ramasami's silent and poignant reaction indicates his disapproval at this exclusion of a poor widow. As an extension of such awareness of discrimination, Ramasami is also portrayed as reacting to his mother's scolding him when he engages in a conversation with his cousin Nagammai (Jyothirmayi), who expresses her love for him and promises to be his Nalayini—the mythological character from the Mahabharatha who served her husband, the leprosy-afflicted sage Maudgalya, with devotion. Ramasami retorts by questioning the hypocrisy of his now-affluent mother disclaiming a past when his father was an ordinary mason linked to Nagammai's family who had helped them. This sequence represents a shift in the tone of the film. The humor in the earlier scenes gives way to seriousness on Ramasami's part as he shouts at his mother (and father) in front of his relatives and the guests, and showcases his anger at the discrimination against his foster mother/widow and his uncle's less affluent family. In contrast to Ramasami's justified anger, the background music, ripe with melodramatic pathos during the sequence with the foster mother, segues into the Tamil cinema staple of the chanted marriage mantra: "*Mangalyam tantunanene mama jeevitham hetuna / Kanthe badhnami subhage tvam jiva saradam satam*" (This is a sacred thread that is essential for my longevity / I tie this around your neck so that, O maiden of many auspicious features, we may live happily for a hundred years). The chanting of such a mantra for the longevity of a husband is immediately undermined, as the succeeding sequence reveals the sorry plight of the widowed child Ammayi. Nevertheless, as Ramasami had made clear through his ridicule earlier, the paradox would be lost on most audiences due to their unfamiliarity with the Sanskrit language.

Thereafter, to the wailing of the women on the soundtrack, Ramasami enters to discover Ammayi surrounded by lamenting older women, his parents, and other relatives uncontrollably weeping at the predicament of the widowed Ammayi. One of the women breaks the ice: "*Enna than irundhalum shastira samparathayappadi seyya vendiyathai senchuthane aaganu*" (Whatever it may be, we have to follow the tradition and the customary rituals). The women surrounding Ammayi break her colorful bangles by forcefully banging her wrists together. Ramasami expresses his shock and dismay at the way they aggressively wipe away the bindi on her forehead and remove the *thali* (marriage) necklace from around her neck. As the women try to remove the flowers in her hair, Ammayi runs toward Ramasami, who consoles her and

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warns the other women to leave the flowers as they are. He also tells them, "*Ammayikku nadanthathu kalayaname illai. Ava vasukku vanthathukkapuram unmayana kalayanatha naane panni vaikkiraen. Athu en poruppu*" (What happened in Ammayi's case was not a marriage. When she comes of age, I will organize her real marriage. That's my responsibility). This sequence depicts Ramasami's profound understanding of the oppression of women and also foretells his profound investment in their welfare.

In the next sequence, we see Venkata Naicker walking into his *mandi* (a wholesale shop), where his employees bow to him with respect. Next, a municipal officer with a folder in his hand arrives, questions Venkata Naicker about his new *choultry* (a resting place for visitors where often free food is provided as part of charity, a common custom that successful businessmen observe) near the railway station, and expresses his intention to visit the site to calculate the tax. Ramasami observes his anxious father getting up from his seat and offering it to the officer, and asking an employee "to pack a little of everything" in his shop and deliver it as a gift to the officer's house. Ramasami is perplexed at his father's subservience, as his father is the municipal counselor and the officer is only a bill collector in the municipal office. The experienced accountant explains his father's strange behavior: "We may have the [financial] status, but upper caste is upper caste and lower caste is lower caste." Again we see a brooding and dismayed Ramasami in a mid-close shot at the end of the sequence. Although this scene engages with caste hierarchy and prefigures his lifelong struggle against the oppression and evil of the caste system, Ramasami is too old for such a revelation in the Indian context. As Kuzhali points out in his blog, Ramasami would have been exposed to such behavior from childhood.

The six sequences discussed above run for approximately fifteen minutes and give us an idea of the structure and length of *Periyar*. Each scene in the episodic biopic on average runs between two and four minutes. The narrative thereafter is an expansion and a variation on the themes of Periyar's crusades against superstitions, conservative traditions, religion, oppression of women, and casteism through vignettes of key events from his life. The classical format of generally establishing or setting up a scene with a long or mid-long shot, then covering the bulk of the drama through mid-shots, and finally closing with a close or mid-close shot remains generally unchanged and predictable through many of the sequences until the end. One reason for such a predictable technique could be the difficulty of making a period film that traverses substantially back in time. Since Periyar was born in 1879, *Periyar* has to travel back more than a century to stage events that occurred during his youth. Accordingly, a minimal style of sequencing events would offer fewer problems in terms of authentically recreating the past through production design for a film with a modest budget like *Periyar*.

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STAR PERSONA

The opening sequences of *Periyar* inform us that Rajasekaran's biography of Periyar is neither a reinterpretation nor an attempt to retool his ideas for contemporary times but a chronicling of events in a classical format with songs to cater to a large audience. The collaboration of stars is not unusual in historical-event-driven biopics. For instance, the protagonist of *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* is Malayalam star Mammooty; similarly, *Sardar* featured the popular character actor Paresh Raval; *Elizabeth* had the versatile Cate Blanchett; and *Lincoln* had Academy Award–winner Daniel Day-Lewis, to mention a few. However, Sathyaraj's donning of Periyar's role marks this particular biopic's difference, too. In the scenes discussed above, Sathyaraj plays a young man by wearing a wig, an act that recalls the trope of old heroes, well beyond their fifties, playing college students in many Tamil films. College campuses usually provide the backdrop for romance in these films; in *Periyar*, however, the real education for Ramasami takes place on the stage of life. The fictive realism of the film gets diluted due to the star text of Sathyaraj—a popular villain turned hero who gradually transformed himself into a character actor by the late 1990s. Just before the release of *Periyar* in 2007, Sathyaraj had played the on-screen father to real-life son and young hero Sibiraj in films like *Jore* and *Vetrivel Shakthivel*. To see Sathyaraj, who has often appeared bald on screen, playing a young Periyar in his twenties calls for our willing suspension of disbelief. Such a suspension becomes possible because of Tamil cinema's habitual portrayal of toupee-wearing older stars performing as young men.

At the same time, such casting also means imagining youth in the garb of the persona of the star. Often the costume, body language, gestures, voice, and dialogue of the star subsume the freshness and energy of young people. In other words, the explicit artifice of the star obstructs the audience's ability to be absorbed into the fictive world of the protagonist. In the case of *Periyar*, Sathyaraj as a star remains outside, despite his deep investment as an actor in the film and his belief in and adherence to Periyar's ideology in real life. He—as much as the audience—is a witness to the happenings within Periyar's family. This witnessing helps the narrative by having Ramasami observe events that shape the Periyar persona, but it also interferes with our identifying with the protagonist and becoming a part of his journey—the persistent struggle against the deeply entrenched caste system that many Tamilians across the board agree to be a part of. While Sathyaraj's Kongu Tamil Kovai dialect (Coimbatore style delivery of Tamil) suits the film, as Periyar was from Erode near Coimbatore, this dialogue shifts our attention from the lived reality of the young Ramasami to the star charisma because of our familiarity as a Tamil audience with Sathyaraj's dialogue delivery. Sathyaraj's persona interferes and creates other kinds of expectations in a manner reminiscent of Oliver Stone's biopic *W*, as discussed by Edward Luce:

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> But, much like *Nixon*, Stone's previous presidential biopic—where you cannot help wondering whether Anthony Hopkins is about to turn into Hannibal Lecter and eat Henry Kissinger's liver for breakfast—Stone's *W* teeters on the brink of *Animal House*. . . . Played semi-convincingly by Josh Brolin, Stone's W is a tragic-comic fool. . . . With the exception of Richard Dreyfuss's Dick Cheney, who captures the vice-president's militantly laconic mien, Stone's characters never slough off their cardboard cut-outs.

Bernard Weinraub in the *New York Times* says that even a veteran like Anthony Hopkins found his role in the biopic on Nixon "the hardest of his 35-year career":

> Seated in his trailer during a lunch break, the actor said he was concentrating on the Nixon voice and accent. Even off camera, Mr. Hopkins tries to walk and talk and gesture like the former President. Yet the role seems to torment Mr. Hopkins, who wears only a fake hair piece and false teeth to hint at a physical resemblance to Nixon. (Mr. Stone said, "I didn't want makeup to get in the way of his ability to allow people to look into him.")

The two passages above inform us of a star's commitment to the biopic as an opportunity to get into the shoes of a larger-than-life personality; they also draw attention to how the star persona, predicated primarily on the significant roles the star has played thus far, subsumes any such role and creates expectations/imaginings even if the director is careful, unlike Rajasekaran, of the makeup not getting in the way of our identification with the protagonist. Additionally, historical dramas come under rigorous scrutiny for the dialects and accents of the actors, as the style of the written as well as spoken language becomes a marker of time/history. For instance, Sathyaraj's Kovai dialect, popularized by the seminal screen writer K. Bhagyaraj and versatile actresses like Kovai Sarala, is embedded in the Tamil cinema imaginary as privileging humor and fluidity through its conspicuous extravagance, unlike the more rural-oriented and hierarchy-driven Tirunelveli dialect. *Periyar* is unorganized in terms of its dialogue delivery: when compared to Ramasami, his mother Chinna Thayamma's dialect lacks the Kovai slant, and his father Venkata Naicker's, with its dominant nasal base tone, sounds professionally dubbed from Telugu.

This problem is not limited to *Periyar*. For instance, Peter Bradshaw's review in *The Guardian* of Stone's *Alexander* emphasizes this crucial aspect:

> Alexander grows to be a sensitive, but fiercely ambitious, visionary youth; Colin Farrell plays him with his natural Irish accent rather than all-American or Bardspeak Brit. Very oddly, however, to cover any anomaly, Stone gets Val Kilmer playing his father King Philip to speak with an Irish accent as well, and Jared Leto has to do

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the same thing playing Alexander's friend Hephaistion. Interestingly, his formidable mother Olympia, played by Angelina Jolie, speaks as if she runs an Italian restaurant. This is one of the most scary performances currently to be seen in the cinema: she is like Anthony Perkins' mom in *Psycho*. With a mommie dearest like Angie, you too would rather hazard everything in battle rather than come in for your tea.

While the disparateness of the voices reflexively draws our attention to the difficulty of staging history for the screen on a modest budget, Stone as quoted in *The Guardian* points to the real problems of dramatizing such unwieldy characters as Alexander:

> According to Screendaily.com he told an audience at the Moroccan event: The script was just too ambiguous, too questioning about an action-hero who was masculine/feminine. . . . These are tough qualities in Hollywood. . . . It's just too big a life. It doesn't fit in into [*sic*] the Hollywood formula.

Periyar's "just too big" a life also poses a substantial challenge for anybody venturing into his biography.

By adopting an episodic format that is monotonous and repetitive, without any differentiation in its rhythm according to the depth of the events (for instance, by attending to his crusade against caste and religion), *Periyar* impedes its audience from seeing beyond the image of Sathyaraj: the image of the actor collides with the image he tries to embody or project. Think of Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*: Denzel Washington, too, was popular, having acted in films like *Mo' Better Blues* and *Mississippi Masala* just prior to *Malcolm X*. In terms of radical politics and charisma, Malcolm X's life could make for the best comparison with Periyar's. In *Malcolm X*, the narrative singularly focuses on race and the mobilization of his community by the black nationalist leader and human rights activist. In *Gandhi*, too, Attenborough never loses sight of Gandhi's mobilization of the Indian masses and his fight against the British. Both biopics made the difficult choice of excluding certain events and personalities in favor of a particular goal. For instance, in *Gandhi*, iconic South Indian leaders like Rajaji and Kamaraj were not given their due. In *Malcolm X*, key events in Malcolm's childhood, like his father's death or his mother's mental illness, are narrated through flashbacks. As a result, Malcolm X's rebellion against racism resonates with similar struggles in the present, whereas Periyar's struggles to transform society seem to be frozen in the past. The relatively diligent *Gandhi* and *Malcolm X* are successful in making the audience identify with their protagonists and root for them. However, *Periyar* is not similarly successful in reinventing Periyar for contemporary times, wherein the divide across caste is as entrenched as it was anytime in the past, mainly because of its rudimentary approach to storytelling.

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EVENTS, CHARACTERS, AND REPRESENTATION

Periyar's life was "too big" and does not easily fit into the Tamil film formula of reducing complex struggles into easy binaries. Either the film papers over ruptures, such as how the party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) departed from Periyar and his ideology, or disavows them, as in the case of Periyar's demonstration against religion through a call for breaking the statues of Hindu idols in public spaces. This is not to minimize Rajasekaran's monumental task in compiling landmark events. Research and choices regarding reenactments, particularly in the case of recent history, is not easy. Steven J. Revele, who along with his coauthor Christopher Wilkinson has written for such biopics as *Nixon*, *Ali*, and *Copying Beethoven*, shares his experience of research and dramatization in biopics in an interview by Don Coppola:

> We do a lot of research before we start. We don't start writing before we have a clear understanding of the nature of the character and the events that we want to portray. So when we get to those lacunae of research, where there is no hard evidence about what was actually said, or how situations were resolved, we make it up. That's what we do as dramatists. . . . If we can write a really compelling, entertaining drama that will bring people to the character, then we've achieved a great deal. If they want to then learn more and find out whether or not we were shading the facts for the sake of drama, they can read about it. If they do that then we have also succeeded. So our goal is to bring these characters to life for an audience and we do that the best way we can, consistent with our research. (Coppola and Revele 16–17)

Rajasekaran's goal as the writer and director of *Periyar*, too, seems to be the same. Given Periyar's prominence in Tamilnadu today, Rajasekaran has carefully chosen from the huge corpus of popular anecdotes and documented events and efficiently woven them together. Nonetheless, as Revele informs us, one of the major challenges in a biopic is the dramatization of events where there is no "hard evidence" or there are many different versions of the same event. One example is Periyar's sojourn in Kasi and his interactions with the (womanizing) Hindu monks or swamijis. Such dramatizations underscore the very purpose of the biopic as they shed light on the particular way the writer/director chooses to interpret the character. It is one thing for Periyar to have a profound conversation on "upper caste" hypocrisy, which would later force him to leave the Justice Party and start his own DK, and another for him to be a witness to the clandestine activities of the monks that only entrench mainstream stereotypes of the salacious swami and his sensuous female devotees, particularly in the way these stereotypes have been portrayed in films. This scene would have benefitted from focusing on Periyar's interiority, as it is his experience in Kasi, where he is a witness to deceit and

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hypocrisy, that reinforces his disbelief in religion. Though biopics could be argued to be as plot-driven as they are character-centered, characterization is key, as the historical drama that drives the plot attains its significance due to the singularity of the main character who offers possibilities for reinterpreting history and questioning the official or popular historiography. In the absence of such a unique and differential representation of the protagonist, the focus shifts to the scale of the spectacle, or to the generic criticism surrounding the faithfulness of the adaptation to the historical events depicted, or to the depth of the characters showcased and to the looks and performances of the artists.

It is in the blogs that we get to see detailed and provocative analyses of the film, whereas popular magazines are generally uncritical and effusive in their praise due to the political and social import of the subject. In *Periyar*'s case, many of the reviews praised the film but criticized the makeup and acting: "Anna [Annadurai] and Kalaignar's [Karunanidhi] makeup should have been done more carefully. The respective actors could have performed better. . . . In one or two places Sathyaraj has merged into the Periyar persona," writes Navam in his insightful response to Agathiyan's review of the film. The popular Tamil weekly *Ananda Vikatan* praises Sathyaraj's acting and says, "Sathyaraj is visible only during [Periyar's] youth since his gait, dress, and gesture become that of Periyar later" ("Cinema Vimarsanam") whereas Pazha Athiyaman's review in the literary magazine *Kalachuvadu* is highly critical of it, stating that Periyar aspired for an egalitarian society in which the masses were not oppressed by "mythology, history, ritual, Brahmin, man, caste, foreign language [and] economy. . . . His life till 1925 is showcased as in popular films. Thereafter, the film suffers because of the insertion of [too many] scenes. Then it ends abruptly." Athiyaman also points to the superficiality surrounding the scenes of Karunanidhi, M. G. R., and others who "seem to be thrust into the narrative while Periyar's politics has been pushed to the background." Athiyaman, too, agrees that Sathyaraj is more convincing in the second half of the film and is "amazing" when he is "not speaking" on screen. Wondering how *Periyar* would have affected novices, he expresses his concern as to whether Periyar would have "registered as an extension of Sathyaraj's garrulous persona" in their minds.

The reviews in a blog post, a popular magazine, and a serious literary journal demonstrate the varied responses to the film, while also reaffirming the difficulty of casting a star as the protagonist and of negotiating which life events to include in the biopic. As Athiyaman notes, some of the problems in *Periyar* could be related to the difficulty of the ninety-four-year-long life, for as Periyar himself acknowledged, it was "twice that of an average human lifespan." Periyar's life has been documented through books and it is well

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entrenched in the Tamil psyche from different perspectives; therefore, there is difficulty "retrieving it from the view-point of those that were connected and close to him" and one must account for the "impossibility of offering a unique perspective on it due to the unavoidability of such a baggage." Revele reminisces about a similar problem in his interview:

> The big challenge in *Ali* was reducing his enormous life to a manageable size. That means selecting the events that we wanted to dramatize and creating a structure in which we could portray those events. It was a huge task of selecting the specific events we wanted to focus on in order to create a portrait of the man that would speak to an audience today. (Coppola and Revele 18)

The reviews on *Periyar* also highlight the problems involved in addressing a contemporary audience through a narrative driven by historical events that have contemporary relevance. Revele further adds:

> We basically covered Ali's life from 1960 to the present time. Michael [Mann, the director] chose to focus on a ten-year period, from 1964 to 1974, and that's because what interested Michael was not so much Ali's spiritual journey as his sociological significance. He selected that twelve-year period and focused on the relationship between Ali's career and his religious transformation and the social context in which that occurred. (Coppola and Revele 18)

Mann's choice of that particular period is understandable as Ali's religious conversion to Islam could be expected to provide topical interest for today's audiences. *Periyar*, however, did not allow such a luxury to Rajasekaran.

POLITICS, NARRATIVE, AND RECEPTION

Rajasekaran did not have the freedom that Mann had in privileging a particular period of his subject's life. The primary reason why Rajasekaran sought to be more comprehensive could have been that despite the Dravidian parties ruling the state for almost five decades, this is the first biopic on Periyar; hence, the undeniable desire to include all the major events and leaders who came in contact with or were inspired by Periyar while narrating a story that would cover his entire lifespan. The other reason could have been the role of the ruling DMK government in supporting the production of the film. DMK gave 99 lakh rupees (approximately $150,000) toward the production of the film, and the film acknowledges its debt to the then Chief Minister Kalaignar (Karunanidhi) in the very first title card that appears on screen when the film begins.[4]

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This card mirrors the concluding scene wherein Kalaignar as the Chief Minister (in 1973) is asking the chief secretary Sabanayagam to follow up on his official orders of state honor to Periyar. This scene, during the final procession with Periyar's cortege, projects Karunanidhi as challenging the central government in his heated conversation with the secretary, who reminds him of the protocols. Karunanidhi replies with an argument regarding Mahatma Gandhi's receiving a similar state honor when he, too, was not a part of the government. He also expresses his willingness to accept the (extreme) consequence of his government's dismissal by the central government for transgressing the rule. He claims that Periyar was to Tamilnadu what Gandhi was for the nation. As noted by Athiyaman, this scene might have helped showcase Karunanidhi's courage but does not help the film, which has failed to elevate Periyar to the level of Gandhi through its narrative. In the discourses surrounding *Periyar*, the comparison with Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* becomes inevitable, though the scale of production and the markets they targeted were vastly different. For instance, Suguna Diwakar in his detailed review says, "it is funny to watch Gandhi and Ambedkar talk in Tamil" and claims, "*Periyar* is not emotionally as compelling as *Gandhi*." Though *Periyar* ran for one hundred days in Chennai, it was not as impactful as *Gandhi* in terms of reaching every nook and corner of Tamilnadu and provoking discussions.[5] One of the main reasons for this limited reach, it could be argued, is the casting of the main character: Ben Kingsley was a fresh face who could engage the audience without bias or preconceived notions regarding the Gandhi persona whereas Sathyaraj's star status, at least in the early segments of the film, was obtrusive.

Even more important to note is how the DMK's involvement in the film colored reviews and the reception of the film. For instance, the popular daily *Dinakaran*, which likely supports the DMK since it is owned by the family of Karunanidhi's nephew, the late Murasoli Maaran, claims in its review, "the scene in which we see Periyar blushing when Anna meets him after 18 years" is excellent ("Oru Sagapthathin"). But earlier the same review highlights the factual inaccuracy of the delayed meeting between Periyar and Annadurai since Anna met Periyar much earlier at the Tiruchi jail after a year of their separation. Scholars like M. S. S. Pandian have detailed how the young DMK ideologues split from DK (Dravidar Kazhagam) because of their investment in consensual politics (759–70). Periyar, however, could prefigure what electoral politics would mean for his social reform movement and was not invested in convincing or keeping his young followers with him. It was, therefore, illogical to think of Anna as a disciple making amends and feeling embarrassed, as exemplified by the concluding part of the same scene. When Anna

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asks Maniyammai (Periyar's much younger second wife, played by Kushboo, whom the DMK relentlessly targeted through print media as one of the main reasons for their separation from Periyar), to forget the past, the moment is as unconvincing as when Maniyammai, in a stereotypical Tamil cinema response, alludes to the cup of coffee on the plate in her hands and says: "Please have coffee."

As noted above, key historical moments that have significantly affected Tamilnadu are stereotypically dramatized in film, in this case to subsume Periyar's radical reformist agenda within the objectives of DMK's consensual politics. The parties claiming lineage to Periyar's DK, both the DMK and Anna Dravidian Progress Federation (ADMK), have opportunistically aligned with both the Congress and the Hindu right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, also known as Indian People's Party). These strategic coalitions are some of the main reasons for *Periyar*'s unsatisfying closure, as Thudippu's blog post points out: "The final scene related to Karunanidhi seems to be thrust in." The Chief Minister Karunanidhi's challenging of the central (Congress) government in 1973, in a film made in 2007, is emblematic of the more than three-decade-old empty rhetoric of the Dravidian ideologues whose opportunistic trajectory Periyar's action of allowing the breakaway faction under Annadurai to split from DK could forebode in 1949. Moviebuzz's review exemplifies this popular sentiment and underscores the chasm between Periyar and the DMK politicians:

> The film traces the life and times of Periyar from his youth to his death. There is a lot of heroism in the character of Periyar, a crusader and reformer who stood for his ideals, at the same time was the messiah of the poor and downtrodden. A man, who was in touching distance of power, but never hankered after the spoils of office. Which modern day politician will shun power and all its heady comforts to be with the man on the streets?

Opposed to DMK's appropriation of *Periyar* are the voices on (and politics of) the other side, wherein the present DK party (under K. Veeramani) and DMK are held responsible for *Periyar*'s limited theatrical run in Tamilnadu. Selventhiran in his blog says that *Periyar* failed at the box office because of political interference as it was "colored" as a film driven by Dravidian ideology. While appreciating Rajasekaran for his research and as a director who has reinvented iconic characters like the great poet Bharathi on screen through his informed and ambivalent approach in *Bharathi*, Selvendran focuses on distribution and reception in his analysis of *Periyar*'s failure: "Initially they asked those who belonged to the DK and DMK to watch the film. Then they asked the government employees to sell the tickets. Now they have announced that school

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children must watch the film and write essays." Of course, he attributes such compulsions to how the DMK government funded the film. Consequently, the posters of the film carried the Dravidian party stamp. Nonetheless, he says *Periyar* revealed Periyar's complexities beyond his anti-Brahminism. Periyar scholars and bloggers have detailed some of the factual mistakes in the film, like Karunanidhi's presence when the DMK was initially formed, or V. V. S. Iyer's presence in the 1924 Cheranmahadevi meeting when Periyar questions the segregation of non-Brahmin students in the dining hall. They have also criticized the omission of some significant characters like Periyar's brother, or key events like the social reformer and activist Moovalur Ramamirtham's split from Periyar's DK, or Periyar's Sri Lankan visit, or the protest against Salt Satyagraha. The film has also been critiqued for its overemphasis on Periyar's friendship with Rajaji at the cost of his proximity to people like V. Anaimuthu, as well as important events like Periyar's protest against Katherine Mayo's book *Mother India*. A *Dinakaran* reviewer notes in his blog the omission of Chinnakkuthusi, who was very close to Periyar ("Oru Sagapthathin"). What is more important than these criticisms, which are unavoidable when it comes to biopics, is the dramatization of the specific events in the life of the iconic protagonist that had a profound and lasting impact on the Tamil populace due to their highly rebellious nature. Such events, like provocative announcements repeated in the media and Periyar's extensive campaign to break religious idols in public spaces, are absent in the film. Consequently, Periyar's persona as an aggressive and ideologically driven activist/reformer is undermined.

RADICALISM, DRAMA, AND THE PUBIC SPHERE

The hallmark of Periyar's subversive politics was how he educated and transformed people, provoking the masses by destabilizing norms. Take, for instance, his investment in intercaste marriages. One could argue that enabling/performing a marriage between people of different castes might not have the same shock value for a contemporary audience, but the repercussions it has on casteist Tamil society to this day cannot be denied. The film has two scenes that look contrived despite being based on well-known events, wherein we see Periyar directly involved in intercaste marriage. Of equally great import is Periyar's call to break the statues of highly revered Hindu gods like Ganesha or Rama in public. The film does not foreground such shocking events. It would be productive, therefore, to look briefly at other key scenes in *Periyar* to interrogate the dramatization surrounding Periyar's radicalism and effectiveness. How does the film engage with the "making of Periyar" or the transition from E. V. Ramasami to Periyar? An answer to such a question would shed

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light on the very purpose of the film. The film's structure informs us of its intent to remind an audience familiar with Periyar's history about the chronology and the significant events in his life and to educate an audience not familiar with his continuing relevance to and singularity in Tamil society. The structure also reveals the (in)effectiveness of Rajasekaran's approach to the biopic on Periyar. Most reviewers and bloggers are in agreement that Sathyaraj's acting is more convincing when he plays the older Periyar in the later half of the film, but they also point to the many events and personalities that have been thrust into the narrative. In a way, the episodic format becomes increasingly monotonous and abbreviated, and at times events are combined.

The key events in the film, as in the initial segment reviewed in detail above, include both the personal and the political. The young Periyar marries Nagammai when she tries to commit suicide to avoid getting married to another man, but is upset when his father slaps him in his shop for having challenged a Brahmin monk for not allowing non-Brahmins to eat in his choultry and settling scores with the monk for cheating their employee by forcing him to accept the warrant for fraud. Ramasami feels particularly insulted, as he expected his father to honor his status as a married man, which leads him to embark on a journey to Kasi/Benaras, but his experience there further reinforces his distaste for swamijis, as he is a witness to their promiscuity and indulgence in the name of religion. When Ramasami returns from Benaras, where he shaved his head, we see his gradual transformation, particularly after his father retires, to a more responsible businessman who is equally invested in "serving the society." Sathyaraj appears more comfortable with playing a relatively older Periyar, the smart entrepreneur and social reformer. The arguable rite of passage represented by the Kasi episode (from the moment Periyar is slapped by his father and journeys to Kasi) is punctuated by two seminal moments.

The first is the song Periyar sings with two of his fellow travelers in Hyderabad to collect funds for their continued travel to Kasi. "*Kadavul ulagatha padachaan, irukkattum kaduvula yaaruvoi padachaan*?" (God created the world, okay! But who created that god?) is cinematic in terms of recalling the songs from the golden age of Tamil cinema set to classical ragas. This song also underscores Periyar's interest in music and singing, which is well documented, and prefigures his investment in addressing the masses directly about the need to challenge and reflect on irrational beliefs, particularly the myth surrounding the three lines on squirrels' backs.[6] Periyar retools this popular myth for his discourse on rationality: "if it were because of Rama's tender touch, what about Sita's bare back? Did he not touch her?" he asks.

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The second important moment is Periyar's discovery of caste hierarchy, even among non-Brahmins, at the choultry for Chettiars where he is denied entry and food, whereas his two Brahmin friends are able to get in and dine easily. This barring prefigures Ramasami's later dissatisfaction with the "higher caste" Vellalas and Mudaliyars in the Justice Party, which makes him break away from them and form his own DK. This episode also resonates with contemporary discourses surrounding the hierarchy and domination of non-Brahmin "upper castes" and their oppression of Dalits. Presently, prominent Dalit public figures, like ex-member of the Legislative Assembly Ravi Kumar and scholars like Stalin Rajangam, have been critical of Periyar's stance toward Dalits. Rajasekaran's film does not address the contemporary discourse surrounding Periyar in Tamilnadu, where he is portrayed not as part of the historical trajectory of Dalit icons in the struggle against caste oppression, but as part of the binary opposite to Dalits where all non-Brahmin "higher castes" are collapsed together as the epitome of caste-based oppression. Scholars therefore address Periyar, from the Naicker community, as a leader of the "other backward castes" (OBCs)—other than the Dalits. *Periyar*, however, does not engage with this debate as it focuses on a straightforward critique of Brahminism/casteism.

If the purpose of the film was to portray the radical life and times of Periyar, it fails. During the last five decades of Dravidian Party rule, statues of Periyar were installed in many cities in Tamilnadu. Below the statues, Periyar's advocacy of rationality, mainly in the form of his provocative statements against religious beliefs, feature prominently—for instance, through a statement such as "*Kadavulai nambugiravan muttal*" (One who believes in god is an idiot). In contrast, right from the outset, DMK's founder Annadurai treaded a path of compromise, as necessitated by the dictates of electoral politics. Annadurai's manifesto changed drastically from Periyar's atheistic philosophy: "*Ondre kulam; oruvane devan*" (One clan; one god). Starting with Annadurai and leading to Karunanidhi, DMK's hypocrisy surrounding atheism has become fodder for cartoonists.

For Periyar, Hindu religion was at the core of the provenance and propagation of caste and had to be uprooted if caste was to be erased and eradicated. In the film, Periyar's radical acts of provoking and insulting believers through print media and in highly visible public areas near bus and railway stations is reduced to a scene in an enclosed alley wherein we see a *chappal* (sandal) flung over an adjacent compound wall as Periyar is traveling by bullock cart. Catching hold of the *seruppu*, Periyar loudly asks, "*Kadavulai karpithavan ayokiyan. Kadavulai vanagubavan muttal*" (One who teaches about god is a rascal. One who worships god is an idiot). We see the other *seruppu*

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come flying, and Periyar happily catches it—having both *seruppugal* now makes a pair that he can use. This sequence, again, reduces Periyar's politics polemics to witty humor. His strident radicalism aimed at waking up sleeping Tamilians is contained as much by the narrow, bounded alley as it is by the foregrounding of his frugal nature. Lost in this scene is his provocative call to challenge the status quo. Similarly, the film totally disavows Periyar's investment in the rights and freedom of women.

Periyar's aesthetic revolves around a mise-en-scène economy; shots are mainly staged indoors or in controlled outdoor situations wherein characters enter and exit the frame mouthing key lines selected from Periyar's documented history, often mechanically. Such an approach, though understandable for a film with a modest budget, undermines Periyar's spirit. Apart from print media, drama in the public sphere was one of the major means by which Periyar mobilized the public for his subversive activities against religion and caste. By denying itself the public sphere for the reenactments of Periyar's iconoclastic acts, the film contains his throbbing radical spirit and paints him as another leader with a difference. As Jennifer Jihye Chun has pointed out in her well-researched essay on the struggles of the union of janitors in these contemporary times of globalization, "public drama . . . [t]hrough colorful protests and mass demonstrations" are effective in publically shaming "corporations for profiting off the working poor." This view echoes Periyar's belief in the possibilities that "public drama" can shame religious and caste-based institutions that he perceived to be the root of all evils in his society. By denying Periyar the freedom to perform his acts of anarchy in the public sphere, the film contains his rebellious character and sanitizes his subversive politics. Thus, Rajasekaran's *Periyar* is a retroactive construction of a sanitized version of Periyar—sans his radicalism—where Karunanidhi, who bookends the film, seems to carry on his legacy. The key moments in Periyar's life, like the struggle for temple entry for Dalits in Vaikkom, marriage of devadasis, inter-caste marriage, and denouncements of religion and caste, are touched upon but not engaged with any depth to make them relevant or provocative for the contemporary viewer.

In her essay "E. V. Ramasami as Dissenter and Provocateur," Paula Richman details Periyar's investment in public dramas:

> In order to focus public attention on the need for social change, he designed "dramas of dissent," performances in public places that spotlighted the flaws of Brahminical Hinduism's power in an allegedly secular state. "Dramas of dissent" made audible in public plays dissenting voices of those who opposed the dominant ideology of his day. . . . One drama of dissent, centered on Ganesha, unfolded as a conflict between Ramasami and C. Rajagopalachari, who soon wrested away control over the event. (23)

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As Richman informs us, Periyar's call to break the Ganesha idols in the public sphere did not meet with as much success as his protest in Vaikkom for temple entry or the picketing of liquor shops. Nonetheless, such dramatic events were key to his subversive, radical politics. Richman also notes, "After assessing the results of Ganesha-smashing, Ramasami choreographed his next drama of dissent in a more tamper-proof way. He focused on pre-event pedagogy in order to incorporate opportunities for teachable moments *before* his public civil disobedience took place" (28). Here it is important to note that Periyar not only treated his protest tactics as public dramas, but also used public dramas as a protest arena where he could address the audience before and after the play, often infusing them with the spirit to challenge accepted norms. For instance, one of Periyar's steadfast followers was the iconic actor M. R. Radha, whose plays—particularly the *Keemayanam*, a subversion of the Ramayana—Periyar effectively used as a space for pedagogy and preparation for protest. Periyar's protégé Annadurai has also praised the effectiveness of M. R. Radha's play as equaling that of their hundred *manadu*/big rallies.[7]

Periyar's preoccupation with public expression of dissent was not restricted to popular plays, as he used even his cadres' regular parades at the village level to showcase the significance of rationality and expose the superstitious belief underlying religious rituals. For instance, he would deconstruct the mysterious aura surrounding "fire walking" during religious festivals by having a trained cadre smoke a cigarette and walk over the fire. Until his last breath, Periyar was committed to public dramas and speeches, as signified in the film by his willing participation despite his poor health, and the advice of Maniyammai, in a final speech during which he collapsed on stage and soon died. Despite this depiction, Rajasekaran's film denies the radicalism of Periyar's politics by disavowing the centrality of the dramas in the public sphere in his life. The film's reenactments, therefore, are not infused with Periyar's rebellious spirit and seem like a necessary ritual; rather, they offer portrayals in a biopic aesthetic that goes against Periyar's very spirit. Rajasekaran's painstaking efforts in *Periyar* are, ultimately, unfulfilling, and also unfulfilled when viewed in the context of what might have been possible if the task of narrating the life of an anticaste reformer had been approached differently.

NOTES

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1. See Geetha and Rajadurai for a detailed account of the Dravidian movement and Periyar's centrality to the imperatives of women's empowerment, rationality, the abolition of caste, and protests against religious/casteist prejudices and oppression.

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2. See Fernandes for a detailed critique of the representation of Phoolan Devi as a subaltern woman in *Bandit Queen*.
3. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.
4. Viswanathan in *The Hindu* informs us that "Tamil Nadu's Information and Publicity Minister Parithi Ilamvazhuthi told the State Assembly on May 7, 2007, that the State Government had granted Rs. 10 lakh to dub the Ambedkar film in Tamil. He also recalled that the State Government provided a grant of Rs. 99 lakh to make a film on the champion of the social justice, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, and ordered tax exemption for screening the film."
5. For details on the critical acclaim and box office success of *Periyar*, see Dhananjayan (459).
6. The folkloric myth about the lines on squirrels' backs is that the squirrels wanted to help Rama in his efforts to build a bridge to Sri Lanka to retrieve his beloved Sita, who Ravana had abducted. Rama was moved by the squirrels' gesture and gently caressed them on their backs, resulting in the three distinct vertical lines they have today.
7. This information also comes from my interview with Olichango, who was closely associated with Periyar for more than four decades, for the documentary *Periyon* (2017), a work in progress. See also Manaa (202–03), for Periyar's appreciation, despite his reservations about popular cinema and theater, of M. R. Radha's efforts at disseminating his progressive ideas through his plays. See Vindhan (88) for details.

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AFFECTIVE RETURNS
BIOPICS AS LIFE NARRATIVES

BINDU MENON

Not on screen
Not in dream
She runs into the heart of darkness
P. K. Rosy
Sprouted in the sesame fields
Onto the thorns and rose petals, she fell.
[. . .]
The night closes in the Tamil land
Where palm leaves and sunshine
Write cinema in a play of light and shadow
Rootless, nameless ends Rosy
Star witness of the madhouse!

—Kureeppuzha Sreekumar, "Nadiyude Raatri" (Actress's Night)[1]

P. K. Rosy, known as both Rosamma and Rajamma, the heroine of the first-ever local film production in Kerala, has made appearances in Kerala's contemporary history in numerous ways. "The Actress's Night," a poem that Malayalam poet Kureeppuzha Sreekumar wrote in 2003 is one such visitation. My attempt in this essay is to take a fragment of P. K. Rosy's life and weave a textured fabric from the uneven warp and weft of her life narratives, cinema, and political history. Rosy (P. K. Rosy's screen name) was the heroine of the first ever local film production, *Vigatakumaran* (The Lost Child) in Thiruvithamkoor, also known as Travancore. Belonging to a Dalit Christian family, Rosy was a laborer in the paddy fields of Thiruvananthapuram town, at times acting in the folk theater of Kakkarissi Nadakam.[2] The first screening of *Vigatakumaran* was held at Capitol Theatre in Thiruvananthapuram town on October 23, 1930. *Vigatakumaran* was announced all over the town by way of notices in both Malayalam and English pasted on bullock carts and

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street walls. The news of the screening was publicized in the local newspapers and also through public announcements using loudspeakers (Vijayakrishnan 23). Malloor S. Govinda Pillai, lawyer and member of *Sreemoolam Prajasabha*, the Travancore Legislative Assembly, inaugurated the screening.

Accounts of the screening narrate the presence of hundreds of people jostling with each other to get into the temporary theater. Twenty minutes into the film, the screen was pelted with stones accompanied by loud jeering and booing. The audience started destroying the chairs and benches and tore the screen (Mani, "Vigatakumarano"). Whenever Rosy appeared on screen, the audience pelted it with stones. The producer-director, J. C. Daniel, and some of the guests present had to take refuge behind the projector and leave the hall. On order from the palace, the screening was stopped and the hall was sealed the next day. The violence did not stop at the screening, however. It was redirected at Rosy.[3] From the few accounts of the period from varying sources over the last seventy or more years, it can be safely assumed that Rosy, as a consequence of this violence, fled the town, never to return to screen or stage.[4] It is interesting to note that *Vigatakumaran* had uneventful screenings in other towns like Alappuzha, Kollam, and Thrissur (Gopalakrishnan, *Cinemayude* 24).

The poem that I quote at the beginning of this article, published in 2003, speaks of the terrifying disappearance of a woman into the darkness of the night who reappears in a different land to live a rootless life severed from her family and community. Some of these lines speak of the violent disappearance in metaphorical ways, and others are literal descriptions of the violence. The poem constitutes a moment of silence not by rendering evidence and spelling out the event but through an act of unsaying. It constitutes an act of mourning for the dreadful fact that histories that disappear are lost forever. It produces an affect, stirring up visceral energies underneath or beside conscious ways of knowing, an affect that propels toward thought and movement, as we will see in the many narratives and voices that emerge out of this disappearance.

In addition to the poem, Rosy's memory inspired the formation of a Rosy Memorial Arts and Sports Club in Thiruvananthapuram city in 2005. The specter of the "disappeared actress" also haunts the contemporary in fictional registers, as in Vinu Abraham's novella *Nashtanayika* (The Lost Heroine). This haunting also partially provides the context for the 2013 award-winning biopic *Celluloid* on J. C. Daniel, the director of the film *Vigatakumaran*. Revisiting Rosy's memory today in each of these narratives requires negotiating political and moral stakes for a range of constituencies. Undertaking an analysis of Rosy's disappearance and the life narratives that have emerged around her disappearance enables us to engage with a contemporary history of cinema publics, caste relations, life narratives as a genre, and affective politics.

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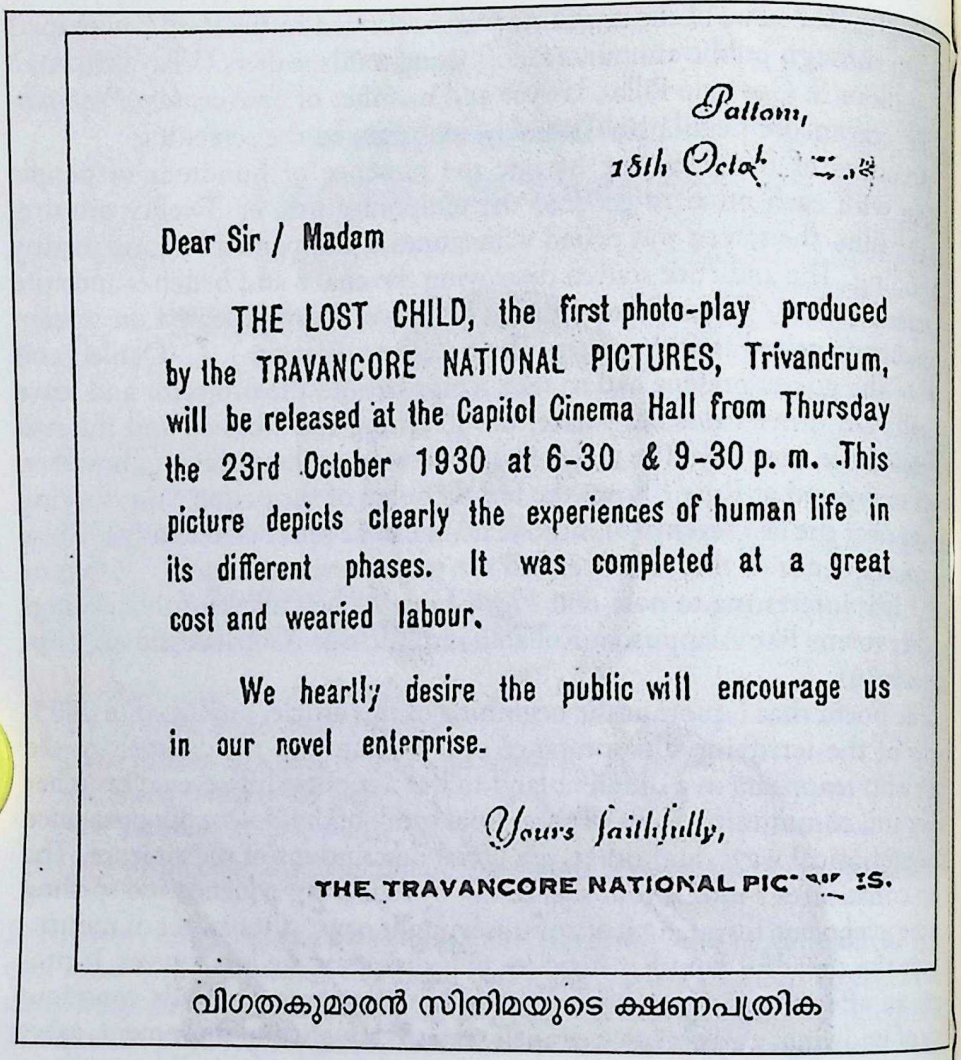

Pattom,
18th Octo[illegible]

Dear Sir / Madam

THE LOST CHILD, the first photo-play produced by the TRAVANCORE NATIONAL PICTURES, Trivandrum, will be released at the Capitol Cinema Hall from Thursday the 23rd October 1930 at 6-30 & 9-30 p. m. This picture depicts clearly the experiences of human life in its different phases. It was completed at a great cost and wearied labour.

We heartly desire the public will encourage us in our novel enterprise.

Yours faithfully,

THE TRAVANCORE NATIONAL PIC[illegible]ES.

വിഗതകുമാരൻ സിനിമയുടെ ക്ഷണപത്രിക

Figure 1. Invitation letter for *Vigatakumaran* (1930).

The principal burden, then, is to locate Rosy's fragmentary life narrative in the context of caste relations in the early twentieth century and the history of subaltern caste movements in Kerala. When placed within a comparative framework, Rosy's various life narratives reveal digressions, divergences, and stopgaps. I treat the caste violence that Rosy endured and the narratives that have emerged around it as an important nodal point in the highly diffused history of caste relations in Indian and particularly Malayalam cinema.

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P. K. ROSY: CHRONICLES OF A DISAPPEARANCE

The violent event in the cinema hall is a vortex that has thrown various fragments and narratives about Rosy into the present. Fragments of the event have been activated in the present, illuminating relationships among the past, present, and perhaps the future, as well as different orders of the past. I attempt to enter a discussion of this event through different narrative forms: biopic, novella, poetry, popular film history in Malayalam language, the historian Kunnukuzhi Mani's biographical essay on Rosy, and a few essays on prominent Dalit Bahujanweb platforms, blogs, and social media.

In June 2004, Mani wrote his biographical essay on Rosy when, for the first time, we are provided a glimpse into her life after her disappearance.[5] In "Charithram Thedi Durantha Nayika," Mani states that when Rosy fled to the highway, she was rescued by Kesava Pillai, a truck driver of the Pioneer Motor Company. Rosy left with him for his town, Nagercoil, married him, and had children. She spent the rest of her life in Nagercoil working in a textile manufacturing unit. An outcast from her family and community, she did not visit them for years to follow. Rosy paid only one visit to her relatives after her father's death (5). Vijayakrishnan, on the other hand, states that it became increasingly difficult for Rosy to live in Thiruvananthapuram town and her house was attacked many times by "upper caste" men who pursued her for sexual favors (26).[6]

The making of *Vigatakumaran* met with many difficulties in its production stage and when Lana, an Anglo Indian actress from Bombay, who was commissioned for the film and withdrew from the project demanding a hefty payment, Daniel was forced to look for a local actress. Johnson, one of the actors in the film, suggested Rosy, by then a well-known Kakkarissi performer, for the role. Rosy and two other women from her neighborhood went to the studio at Pattom every day carrying their lunch, as they worked as laborers in the paddy fields of Thiruvananthapuram. The film was shot on a roofless studio in daylight and Rosy, according to Daniel, was about twenty-five years old when she started acting in *Vigatakumaran* (Gopalakrishnan, *Malayala* 22). Like many other families of her caste in the town, Rosy's family converted to Christianity by joining either the London Missionary Society or the Salvation Army (Mani, "Charithram" 16). Rosy, according to her biographer, had started performing in the Dalit folk theater, Kakkarissi Nadakam, at age sixteen and was a very popular actress. Two competing theater troupes in Rosy's town came to clashes on the issue of hiring her for their productions, creating social tension in the locality that forced the family eventually to shift to Thycaud, another part of town. Rosy continued performing in seasonal

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Figure 2. Photograph of Capitol Cinema Thiruvananthapuram (photographer and year unknown). Source: private collection of B. Vijaya Kumar, Cochin.

Kakkarissi theater and worked in the fields until she acted in *Vigatakumaran* and eventually disappeared (Mani, "Charithram).

Historians faced with the challenge of a lack of textual evidence and crippled by the lack of reliable procedures for verification set out to compensate through conjecture. Historical inquiry thus involves what Carlo Ginzburg describes as something similar to a hunter's search for clues and evidence. Like the hunter crouched in mud, searching for the trace of some invisible game, the historian has to deduce behavior from minute and subtle indicators (96–125).

Within the corpus of stories presented to us, silences are produced both by the absence of facts and the circulation of competing interpretations. The traces I distinguish here overlap in real time. Following Michel-Rolph Trouillot, I treat these traces as heuristic devices that distill aspects of historical production, which aid in and expose not just the entry and exit of power in the story but are constitutive of the story. The violence at the cinema hall causes a kind of turbulence, and the materiality of this event creates an array of bodies and artifacts. This inquiry is made possible by working through traces of traces—an absent film text, sparse newspaper reports, missing police records, the first film notice, still photographs from the film, and the pamphlet for the film.

Historical research on silent cinema in general and within the Indian context in particular stands at odds with Michel de Certeau's injunction that "'going to the archives' is the statement of a tacit law of history" (77). With

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more than 90 percent of silent films lost and in some cases only fragments preserved (Chabria and Usai 8), the silent film archive itself is an assemblage of traces, gaps, silences, and absences, rendering extant-centric film history an irrational and unviable project. The material property of the film archives makes the film historian turn toward the processes through which archives make meanings. A call to treat the object of archives itself as a trace is present in Arondekar's words when she argues "both within and beyond the Derridean spectrality model, to consider, as it were, both the forensics and metaphorics of the trace. That is, one must work with the empirical status of the materials, even as that very status is rendered fictive" (3). There is, in short, no ready dialogic relationship between the trace objects and historical analysis, since trace objects are not ready bearers of any transparent historical meanings. Astonishingly enough, the photographs and notices in this case do not ensure the "truth effect" but form only one part of a network of such trace objects and the discursive world of rumors and scandal (Mukherjee 31). In a brilliant discussion of relics and trace objects that travel into the contemporary and the problems in reading them, Bhatnagar provides a rare insight into the nature of the trace object. On the linguistic trace object in Braj language, she states, "It evokes the early modern in its persistence into the 20th century modern by a flash of illumination in which characters, bodily gesture, the perceiving eye combine with the trace object to compose a visual ekphrasis of language as a set of moving pictures" (77). Much in the same way, Rosy's print and visual traces illuminate the present with early twentieth-century print characters, unfamiliar bodies, and visual iconography to quite literally form a visual ekphrasis in conjunction with the perceptions of the contemporary. I intend to offer a few remarks towards recalibrating the transactions between the event, life narratives, and the work of caste in structuring them by reading these trace objects. When working with the early twentieth-century film archives, recognizing this analytical remove and the ephemerality of the visual objects is imperative while also relinquishing the practice of writing history based on evidence.

SITUATING THE EVENT IN CASTE STRUCTURE

Vigatakumaran was made during a period of urban development in Thiruvananthapuram town, the capital of the princely state of Travancore. Societal modernization and cultural modernity were initiated in Travancore as early as the first half of the nineteenth century. The emergence of a commercial economy in Travancore and its integration into a world capitalist order through agrarian expansion with the development of plantations and the importation of foreign capital was the starting point of this modernization (Mahadevan).

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Subaltern caste movements that emerged in this context thus sought to lay claims over social spaces as part of their social transformation project. The role of Protestant missionary work in the process of Dalit social transformation is well documented, as they recorded the intertwined relationship between caste and slavery in Travancore and made the issue international. The missionary activities among the erstwhile "untouchable" communities since the nineteenth century and their conversion to Christianity made them a distinct community by the end of the 1890s (Mohan, "Religion" 37).

The missionary work, however, framed in patronizing terms, introduced concepts of equality along with a pursuit of salvation, which brought in both a sense of millennial transformation and a search for equality. P. Sanal Mohan argues that the missionary discourse, literacy, and schooling encouraged more engagement with emergent discourses on citizenship, rights, judiciary, and political powers, enabling the oppressed castes to lay claims over public spaces as well as administrative and natural resources, and subsequently to force open the legislative space ("Religion" 35).

Various works on Travancore history show that development and progress worked differently among various caste communities and have a history ridden with conflicts.[7] An example of this would be the breast cloth struggle by the Channar women.[8] Enabled by ideas of progress since the first half of the nineteenth century and inspired by reform movements such as the Vaikundaswamy cult and interventions by the Protestant missionaries, the Channars demanded the right to cover their breasts in public (Yesudas 69–70). In a perceptive essay on individual Dalit women's conversion to Christianity and Islam during the colonial period, Charu Gupta reads these acts by Dalit women as embodying a language of intimate rights and finds in these narratives accounts of resistant materialities. She argues, "The recalcitrance of desire threw up emancipatory possibilities of intimate rights where highly ritualized acts of conversion, clothing, and marriage could at times become a metaphor for a new vocabulary of body, of interiority, of subjectivity" ("Intimate" 681). In Rosy's traces, which travel to us from the early twentieth century, how do we read the figure of a converted Christian from one of the most oppressed castes, a popular actress in folk theater by night, a laborer by day, the first actress of the Malayalam silver screen, and later a forgotten figure? What social relations and aesthetic modes enabled Rosy to enter the silver screen and what expelled her from her life and community?

Until the early decades of the twentieth century, entertainment forums were clearly demarcated by gender, caste, and class boundaries in almost all parts of Travancore. The cumulative effect of reordering public spaces was a "democratic" subversion of this old social order.[9] New spaces were created

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that were secular in their access and modern in organizing the bodies that inhabited them, yet remained resolutely exclusivist and ordered through the existing caste structure. Drawing from contemporary journals and secondary works on early theater as well as reports on cinema halls, one can discern the emergence of social spaces organized in a hierarchy of bodies. Locating the configuration of space and the ordering of bodies in theater in Travancore in the early twentieth century might help us understand the existing mode of visuality and its relationship to the body.

In the Malayalam region, the first recorded performances of women actresses in song and dance or amateur productions emerged in the early 1930s (Madathil 23). Traveling Tamil song and dance drama companies occasionally featured actresses. Thus, Rosy and other women who were part of folk theater forms were some of the first women to perform in public. Furthermore, while the presence of Dalit communities in the context of traditional arts in the subcontinent is well documented, performances like folk and local forms of theater and dance were particularly related to Dalit women's bodies, which were often positioned as objects of arousal (Rege, "The Hegemonic" 24).

Whatever the extent of the publicness of these forms, Rosy's passage from theater to the new visual register of cinema is a shift that demands our critical attention. The acceptance of Rosy as a folk theater performer and her banishment from the modern space of cinema, a yet-to-be-formed public space, is more than a sporadic or singular event of violence. While bodies in folk theater were located within sanctioned social relations and were thus shorn of the power to represent anything other than themselves as caste bodies (Groesbeck 93), the cinematic image was a commodity untethered to its conditions of production and set loose within a domain where it takes on a life of its own. In this sense, the fear of the Dalit woman entering the new public space in the 1930s through a new technology of representation resonated with the larger fear about Dalit communities gaining rights over public spaces.[10]

In Travancore, the reorganization of public spaces also meant that the body, with its particular, gendered characteristics (ideal "manliness" and "womanliness"), was subjected to disciplinary mechanisms and seen as the site where reforms had to be performed (Devika). This structure also embraced representational practices such as portraiture, photography, theater, and cinema. The discursive effect of this embrace was the pervasiveness of the female image in modernity and the emergence of a female image as an index of modernity. I would like to draw on a premise familiar to feminist theory: that the modern mechanism of looking is predicated on gender asymmetry such that women are defined by their visibility. Many historically inflected versions of this thesis concur with the view of the emergence of woman as

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object, but they ground their argument on the changing perceptual field of modernity rather than on the psychoanalysis of male sexuality (Conor 16). Martin Jay, in his seminal work on vision, titled *Downcast Eyes*, proposes the emergence of the "hegemony of vision" as the most important sensory perception and as a corollary of Western modernity (267). These conditions in modernity resulted in barring women from the modern subject position of the spectator because of their existence as embodied, spectacular objects. In the context of early photography in the region, Parayil argues that the visual iconography of photography emerges within a semiotics of the caste body defined in conjunction with colonial anthropometrics and labor. His work maps the photographic representations of female body within an aesthetic regime and an exacting matrix of caste and gender relations.

The upshot of reform strategies among "upper castes," Devika argues, is the centralization of a certain nonreciprocal relationship of visibility in the complementary sexual exchange between "domestic woman" and "public man." On this point of the "aestheticization" of women, Conor's work on spectacular modernity and how women's bodies become part of a spectacle deeply implicated in modern forms of subjectivity, functions as an invaluable corollary text. In his work on autobiographies and Kerala's colonial modernity, Udaya Kumar elucidates the moves through which the body was invested with a new regime of disciplinary technologies (290). How do we understand these broad processes in modernity that seek to define gender and caste as visible economies and continue to confer a central position of visuality in subsequent articulation up until the present?

In this context we can approach the variously gendered discourses of Dalit social struggle in the early twentieth century, where Dalit reform discourse on Dalit femininity had focused differently from Savarna femininity. Dress reforms, conjugal relations, women's education, and motherhood all became the sites of these conceptual refashionings of women's selves in all communities. Dalit and other "lower caste" women who have a longer history of being in public spaces as laboring bodies and participating in public activities further problematize the categories of "domestic woman" and "public man." Subaltern social reform discourses in the 1930s, for instance, turned repeatedly to the historical legacy of caste and gender to articulate a violated Dalit femininity, one that worked specifically to expose and challenge the cultural and corporeal effect of the dominant caste patriarchy. Sanal Mohan's work on Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS), a new Christian religious sect established by the legendary and charismatic Dalit leader Poykayil Appachan, provides an important account of how the new bodily practices of Dalit communities were considered significant for claiming social equality in the larger

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society and argues that this claiming formed a central part of the colonial modernity of the Dalit community ("Religion" 165). The PRDS reform project put equal emphasis on spiritual and bodily cleanliness as an essential endowment of a new Dalit self.

Rekha Raj, analyzing the Dalit movements of the early twentieth century, argues that Dalit Movements cannot be seen as derivative of other "lower caste" reform movements like the Ezhava reform movement, since communities enter the space of modernity with differing cultural capabilities (71). She argues, "as far as the historically marginalized 'lower castes' were concerned, they had to be recognized as humans first so as to claim citizenship rights. It points to a structural disparity; a crisis of representation and inclusion endemic to the then existing social system" (71). Through an examination of Dalit women's struggles such as the Kallayum Malayum Samaram, a movement to abandon ornaments that were markers of caste, and the struggles of women who were part of the PRDS, she shows how each of these struggles was woven into the complex relationship of community and rights (83).

Feminist theory's lengthy and crucial exploration of the visible economy that governs sexual difference has most often been limited to the figure of woman. The spectacular female body can be read along with another significant figure in the turn of the century—the figure of the "modern girl." As a sign of social, economic, sexual, and political empowerment as well as a site of anxiety, the modern girl was constituted through advertising, cinema, and photography as an essential aspect of commodity culture. The modern girl has been seen as the work of a range of modernist aesthetic processes, and her surface image and representation have been viewed as an outcome of this work (Weinbaum 16). Visuality was seen as important in the self-representation of women who considered themselves "modern," and women used photography, paintings, portraiture, and literary representations to stage spectacle and the self (Conor 6). Analyzing the modern girl in the Indian context, Priti Ramamurthy argues that in 1920s India, the figure of the modern girl inhabited a "charged space" where colonial, international, and national categories of inclusion and exclusion were articulated, fortified, contested, and disordered (165). The visual iconography of the modern girl in Indian cinema of the 1920s, she argues, was a creation of such global aesthetics and transnational cultural exchanges. The contested, unstable, and subversive relationship of the modern girl to institutions of marriage and heterosexuality, and her transgressions of racial and other boundaries infuses the figure with a critical charge.

Let us now return to Rosy. How do we view her as the first woman to access the status of a "modern girl" in a caste society where women, particularly

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Figure 3. Rosy, photograph found in 2011. Reproduced by permission of Matrubhumi.com.

Dalit women, hardly exercised any control over their bodies? The relationships among caste, performance, and gender extend the consideration of questions of the visible by focusing on the sexual economy that underlies spectacular violence as a disciplinary practice for patriarchal and dominant caste control at the turn of the century. Here, the commodification of the Dalit woman's body that accompanied the transformation from theater to cinema, which opens up challenging and contradictory possibilities, is mediated through a complicated process of sexualization and gendering. We can see from the sparse descriptions of what ensued at the screening that, besides moral anxiety, the violence Rosy endured also gestures toward an anxiety about her independence, enhanced cultural status, and appeal as a new figure of urban modernity.

REVERBERATIONS: CASTE, GENDER, AND LIFE NARRATIVES

Enfolded within the diffuse tides of the social relations discussed above, Rosy's life narratives in different forms and genres are larger than her life itself. Out of the debris of this apparently seamless historiography, there seems to emerge new political and historiographical possibilities. The performativity

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of the self and its account in autobiography and the representation of the self in a variety of forms in biographies, life writing, and its various forms like biopics give us important traction in the study of life narratives "that can produce enabling re-descriptions of life-worlds and facilitate the re-imagination of the political" (Kapoor 39).

The resurrection of Rosy from the debris of history and the density of narratives around the violence at the cinema hall together limn a new and different genre of political consciousness and purpose regarding her previous absence. The narratives that have been spawned out of the event and Rosy's life have not just been represented in various forms but also have differing and complex relationships to that event and that life. Whereas the poem and popular history writing better testify to the importance of the violence Rosy endured, *Celluloid*, the recent biopic on J. C. Daniel that I discuss below, makes Rosy's life a footnote to the life of the male artist, a life haunted by the specter of caste violence. The poem recalls the abject subject back into history through allegorical devices, and popular history writing mobilizes a counter-historical representation through a range of referential evidence like newspapers, biographies, and oral history of the community. Rosy's disappearance is reiterated and made more palpable by a special kind of representation that replaces the "original" in a way that produces affect.

Despite her absence in contemporary periodicals and newspapers, Rosy is mentioned a decade later in print. In 1939, a few years after the release of the film, K. P. Raman Pillai wrote about Malayalam film history thus: "The silent film *Vigatakumaran* put together by one Daniel from Pattom and 'Padakkara Hollywood harijan' women happens to be the first Malayalam film." Pillai's mocking tone in regard to Dalit labor in general and Rosy in particular is unmistakable. Chelangad Gopalakrishnan, a veteran Malayalam film journalist writing since the 1940s, offers in his search for J. C. Daniel a sympathetic reference to Rosy by identifying the sexual harassment she faced and how she had to endure a life away from her community and family. However, while Daniel emerges as a tragic figure in Gopalakrishnan's text, an artist crushed under the juggernaut of capitalist industry, Rosy has, at best, remained a footnote to this history. These cases of minimal reporting or absence of reporting in early twentieth-century Malayalam print culture forecloses the possibility of finding dissenting voices that truly took up Rosy's cause and critiqued the violence she experienced. Further, it lays bare the limitations of contemporary print culture when confronted with new developments in vernacular modernity—new visual technologies, "lower caste" entrepreneurship, and the entry of "lower caste" bodies into new public spaces governed by structures of modernity. As noted, Dalit women's bodies have always been regarded with

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extreme moral ambivalence and repeatedly brought into focus through questions of sexual promiscuity (Gupta, *Gender* 15).

We can see from a description of the violence at the cinema hall that the presence of a Dalit woman on screen challenged the political and ontological assumptions of even the most radical thinkers of early twentieth-century Travancore. This presence, in other words, was an unthinkable fact in the framework of political thought.[11] In this sense, the first Malayalam film, its form of investment, and its use of performing bodies was unthinkable for its time; it challenged the very framework within which proponents and opponents examined caste, gender, and reform in vernacular modernity. Only cinema as a specific assemblage of technology and representation revealed with severity the rigidity of this framework in the early twentieth century.

In 2013, Kamal, a prominent filmmaker in Malayalam commercial cinema, made the film *Celluloid* as a tribute to the father of Malayalam cinema, J. C. Daniel. The film won several awards, including the Kerala state award for the best film and the national award for the best feature film in Malayalam. The film has become controversial since then and has been at the center of debates that propelled Rosy's tragic personal story into the nucleus of a larger sociological discussion on the relationships of caste, gender, and cinema. The film foregrounds the life of Daniel, his struggles, and his melancholic existence after his unsuccessful attempts at filmmaking and the many assaults on his career by various forces. Though Rosy's stage and film career and the violence against her is depicted empathetically, Rosy disappears from *Celluloid* soon after the filmmaking is over. The controversies involved questions about the actual sequence of events, historical details, the liberty to fictionalize history, and the politics of Dalit representation and commercialization. The debate assumed significance in Dalit writings on prominent Dalit websites like *Round Table India*, and in social media and print (Ramachandran and Cheruvally).

Celluloid is narrated from the point of view of the film journalist Chelangad Gopalakrishnan and moves between the present and past as if on a journey through the archives of memory. The film participates in a retro mode of filmmaking that makes the past visible in the cinematic narrative through an interspersion of fact and fiction, memory and loss (Sreedharan and Abraham). *Celluloid* strives against a deafening silence in the archive and tries to recover lost voices from the past. It uses a film-within-a-film format to produce an ensemble encompassing both the filmmaking process of the original *Vigatakumaran* and the process of writing film history.

This recovery project itself is complex, involving questions of exclusion and inclusion and of the voices that get foregrounded. For Kamal, the project

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was to rewrite film history by foregrounding the pioneer J. C. Daniel's story as a biopic.[12] Kamal's belief in history takes him very close to other projects in cinema that display the faith that a biopic can redeem the past and rescue the real from myriad versions of the past.[13] While this faith concurs with the speaking position the film assumes on behalf of the failed filmmaker, for many others such faith involves questions of exclusion. Ajith Kumar points out that the film features Rosy for more than half of its screen time and yet refuses to foreground Rosy's voice. The treatment of Rosy as a tragic and mute figure has come under attack for misrepresenting Dalit and working-class life. Says Rupesh Kumar, "Considering the physical environment, the geographical environment and the working class atmosphere in which this Dalit woman lived, there is no way she would be this submissive" (Sebastian 6).

Figure 4. Rosy, as imagined by illustrator Pradeep Kumar. Reproduced by permission of *Chitrabhumi Weekly*.

Kamal's representation of Rosy reflects the ambiguities related to caste bodies in the context of cinema in the 1930s. A popular song from the film, "Enithonnum Arinjatheyilley" (I Am Unaware of This), calibrates all the ambiguities in a succinct fashion. The song, set in a style reminiscent of a reinvented folk tradition of the Malayalam theater of the 1950s, expresses Rosy's fears and anxieties about entering the new space of cinema. At the beginning of the song sequence, Rosy gazes at her reflection in a sliver of a mirror that reflects sunlight on her, prefiguring her entry into a regime of reflections and gazes through the cinema. The mirror here is more than a metaphor for cinema and certainly plays with the idea of reflection in the song, reminding us of the reflections and gaze of the audience, the camera, and the lights that will make her visible in the public in the future. In the song, she doubts her beauty and the appropriateness of her body for an emerging visual iconography of cinema. Further, Rosy is elaborately dressed like a Nair woman by Janet Daniel, J. C. Daniel's wife, in preparation for the role of the "upper caste" woman. This sequence prepares Rosy for her role and in the process erases her caste markers, making her available to the audience as a desirable body; an easy passage into a casteless/"upper caste" visual iconography, an act of passing that

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has contradictory meanings. What modes of corporeal investments did she have to make in order to perform a body socially different from hers?

K. K. Kochu argues that, in the film, Rosy is not shown to have experienced difficulties in this passage because of the mediation of her feminini through Janet. The political context of *Celluloid* also draws attention to questions of representability of experience, as voiced in the concerns raised in the subsequent public debates. Jenny Rowena, in a perceptive analysis of continuing structures of caste, writes, "Those who write on Rosy, describe it as atrocity which happened when a rigid caste system existed." Rowena's point about the continuing structures of violence calls upon us to reflect on the status and singularity of violence. The violence at the screening is one point, although an outstanding point, in a larger series of caste violence before and after this event. Many argued that, however critical of the caste system, the film treats caste hierarchy as one that existed only in Malayalam cinema's past (Rowena; A. Kumar). Though overtly sympathetic, the argument goes, *Celluloid* is not capable of opening up the space of "otherness" and reconciling memory with hope. K. K. Kochu views this unrepresentability of caste experience through the prism of the very nature of commercialized cinema (Kochu).

What possible affective constellations can open up this space of "otherness" in cinema? *Celluloid*, instead of settling the questions about the origins of Malayalam cinema, seems to open out a new set of questions around the very idea of representability. The Dalit explorations through writings on Rosy and *Celluloid* are two different kinds of historical inquiries. While the film tries to mourn a lost film history, Dalit mourning is for the figure of the actress. In differing ways, these inquiries try to interrogate the archives and find gaps in them from which to speak out. The Dalit Bahujan critique is more than a debate on misrepresentation and demands an assessment of the interpretative framework that the biopic thrusts upon the event. The figure of the "film historian" in *Celluloid* helps in recrafting personal memories and individual recollections into an alternative archive. Cinema does not have to stand the test of "authenticity" and "factuality"—it brings forth the contradictory impulses of the archives. In the Dalit historical inquiry, the structural and visible architecture of caste ideology is a recurring theme. The belief in creating an alternative archive of Dalit knowledge has inspired Dalit intellectuals to announce a new film on Rosy, the work on which is underway (Sebastian 6). This archive, Kochu argues, lies in its ability to call upon an affective Dalit cultural memory and can be most effectively redeemed in cinema. What emerges in this discourse is not a deterministic or diagnostic category of Dalit cinema, but the radical vision of how Dalit identity in cinema can be enacted in a confluence of politics, history, culture, and aesthetics.

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AFFECTIVE RETURNS: EVENT, STRUCTURE, NARRATIVES

All these narratives, including the biopic, through their disparate techniques have attempted to create a legible object of history. The scene of the violent event at the cinema hall in 1930 and the lingering violence on Rosy that has been described in narratives, poetry, cinema, and popular history so far, is one of passion, transgression, invasion, and exhilaration. These heterogeneous narratives also speak of power, violation, purity, and strict, rigid, and obsessive fascination with boundaries between different caste groups. The description and memory of the violence terrifies, enrages, entraps, or shields us according to the bodies and subjectivities we inhabit within this cultural symbolic. For Dalit and "lower caste" women, narratives of the violence Rosy endured are reminders of Brahmanical patriarchy's techniques of controlling and governing their bodies and social lives. For "upper caste" women, the narrative about the moral anxiety surrounding Rosy's story is a reminder of caste borders and control over women's bodies. In a variety of ways, the memory of the violent event stirs anxieties linked to the most turbulent history of caste in Kerala. The description of this particular violent event resonates with existing nightmares about caste violence that are still in circulation. Rarely discussed but omnipresent, the narratives boil and bubble just below the surface of the silver screen, mutely, perpetually, without ever surfacing but nevertheless shaping the surface. This latent nightmare and fear of caste boundaries sets the scene for playing out of some of the worst cultural anxieties—desire, fear, and violence—about gender, sexuality, and caste, and about history and bodies at the site of cinema.[14]

The coding of this scene of violence and the way it is rendered through contemporary periodicals and in film history is not explicit. This scene of a "lower caste" female body on the screen and the accompanying unruly violent audience response has led to competing interpretations. Until Dalit historian Mani wrote about Rosy, this scene had been rendered as one with no caste signifiers. Divided against positions of aggression and defense, cinema became the site where all female bodies were delivered to an unruly male audience. It is through the work of memory and history that Dalit historians, poets, and filmmakers make the coding of this scene explicit. Through this history of representational practices in poetry, popular history, and cinema, we can see how caste society comes to be pitted against a Dalit woman's body at the site of cinema. This scene marked by violence, marked her body and her specular exposure to pain, as a spectacle, the visible economy of which is its claim to truth.

Set in continually changing caste relationships from colonial past to the present and in political imaginations of annihilating caste in the future, we

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need to attend to the relationship between the violence Rosy experienced and the genre of life narratives. Assessing this relationship is not just an attempt to understand a singular event of violence but an act of encountering the logic of violence vital to the unfolding of modernity. Historical knowledge plays a pivotal role in the process of identity formation and the consciousness that emerges from it. It has been observed that "lower caste" communities in the context of social change imagine history as a resource to affirm their social rootedness (Mohan, "Creation"; de Heering). Recent works on Dalit history in Travancore foreground a historical project that attempts to retrieve the experiences of suffering and pain, which the ancestors of "lower caste" communities endured in Travancore, and which is unthinkable outside of colonial modernity.[15] These discourses made the "lower castes" realize the erasure they experienced as a collectivity because of the complete absence of any "valid history" of their own. For the "lower castes," historical knowledge tends to acquire a liberatory function as it attempts to challenge the dominance of the "upper castes."

This notion of the past and the lack of resources to write history frames Kunnukuzhy Mani's 2004 biographical essay on Rosy titled "Tragic Heroine in Search of History." In this case, retrospective significance is created by the political actors themselves as a past within their past and also as a future projected onto the present. Life writing has provided a language which speaks to memories and experiences on the one hand, and engages with disciplinary knowledge production on the other. This language does not follow the protocols and grammar of the fields of art, creativity, history, or fiction. It expresses itself in an impressionistic mode and hence is visible only as traces or through the effects it produces. In the domain of historical knowledge, the new registers of life writing have given the experiences of the present and memories of the past a new status of genuine "evidence" or at times bare the problem of evidentiality, altering not only the past but the very process of knowledge production. This has enabled not just a sifting through the debris of normative history, but also the creation of another archive based on memory.[16] Life writings reactivate the affect of the event that has been silenced through routinization.

As the title of Mani's biographical essay indicates, Rosy enters the archive as a tragic figure who bears the marks of violence inflicted upon her community. Is there a historical method that would enable her to speak? At the site of film history, we are forced to ask the question whether subaltern subjects like Dalit women can speak for themselves. In her seminal work on the place of fantasy in feminist historiography, Joan Scott recognizes that the feminist historian's daunting task is to translate, interpret, and represent. Scott—much

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like Steedman (83)—argues that archives can be the source and space for historical imagination (Scott 147). Imagining the archive in its most expansive manner, as memory's potential space, helps us to understand archives of all kinds as repositories of both passion and information. The emphasis, it follows, should be on a historiography that nurtures "imaginative capabilities," from the "circulating critical passions" from women's struggles (Scott 72).

While Rosy enters the space of cinema in the early twentieth century as an essential folk theater actress, she leaves the space of cinema mutely. As we saw while reviewing the debates on this, this disappearance has prompted questions about the very nature of the cinematic apparatus, as structured by caste relations. In revisiting this singular act of violence, tensions that were earlier read primarily in gendered terms have been particularly reopened to questions of gender as mediated by caste. This excursion through various forms of life narratives, has also reinterpreted memory, oral sources, and archives. The affect of the event, silenced and routinized in history so far, is reactivated in these life narratives.

In the spirit of Walter Benjamin's approach, it can be argued that when images from the past are brought into constellation with the present, "the lightning flash" generates an illumination of history (121). The discarded and outdated image emerges from the past and becomes legible in the present so that we may gain critical knowledge of the present. In this case, the lightning flash produced between the past and the present illuminates the Dalit female actress from the recesses of history and renders visible the mutable identities of Dalit womanhood: folk performer, actress, laborer, modern girl, all at once. In these divergent life narratives, Rosy emerges as a critical metaphor that offers possibilities of progressive and different readings.[17] As the introduction to this volume eloquently states,

> Dalit life narratives . . . often frame events and represent caste in distinct ways, challenging ideas of the "unrepresentable" and investing in an ethics of testimony. Different practices of representing caste lives thus throw open for us possibilities of challenging dominant embodiments, where representation is not just about replication but also about innovation. (Shankar and Gupta 11)

I now return to the question of the singular event and the various life narratives that correspond to it. What if we were to read the event as not a singular event in the past, but as a continuing relationship with different orders of time? The event has left traces and constituted memories. This is a call to restore cinema's disavowal of caste histories to an ethics of memory and to mobilize the affective veracity. I have already suggested a quasi-Benjaminian form to these traces and their relationship to the event. Biopics as a genre,

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we see, are affective returns that are spread across many kinds of genres, acts, and performances. Cinema and life narratives, both of which in a sense are specific kinds of exercises in memory keeping and making, offer the possibility of perpetual return, of immortality. When Kochu makes an insightful argument for creating an archive that has the ability to call upon an affective Dalit cultural memory that can crystallize it in cultural forms and probe contagious sites of counter power, he is making an invaluable countertext to official history's relationship to the event. The many illuminations of the past that these life narratives offer can perhaps be fully appreciated as affective returns. In Brian Massumi's reckoning, the event "can't be restricted to one occurrence. Its quality of experience is bound to return" (104). In Rosy's life narratives, we see the reactivation of the past in the passage toward an already altered future, through the past and future of caste and gender relations, but also between different orders of the past in relation to gender and caste.

NOTES

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1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.
2. Rosy was born into the Pulaya caste, an erstwhile agricultural slave caste in Kerala. The Pulayas were technically freed from agricultural slavery after the Travancore abolition of slavery act in 1855. Political mobilization, education, and economic independence led to their upward social and economic mobility to a limited extent (see Saradamoni Basu). Caste names like "Pulaya" and "Paraya" widely used in colonial scholarship and in the later period are derogatory in nature, and hence I use these terms in this footnote, keeping in mind their historical context and complexities. I have mostly used the term Dalit, which literally means "broken" or "shattered," to refer to an agential identity and political gesture of self-recognition. The other terms currently used to refer to relationship among castes are "oppressed caste" and "dominant caste." In the essay, I use the terms "upper caste" and "lower caste" to refer to their existing usage in academic scholarshipwhile problematizing them.
3. Chelangad Gopalakrishnan, the first journalist to write about the film and its fate, states that a large angry mob attacked and set fire to Rosy's house, which was nothing more than a shack, the third night after the screening. Two police men on guard were forced to flee, the family escaped, and Rosy ran as far as to the highway, seeking help (*Cinemayude* 22).

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4. The narratives about Rosy's disappearance order the events differently. In the descriptions by Gopalakrishnan and by Mani ("Charithram"; "Vigatakumaran"), Rosy fled the town on the third night of the first screening, following the violence against her. In my interview with him, Kavil Krishnan—Rosy's cousin, Indian National Congress activist, and the only relative who maintained ties with Rosy—claims that attacks against Rosy, pressure for sexual favors, and attempts to molest her continued for almost a year after the screening. He also claims that she fled once when she was attacked while returning home after a Kakkarissi performance.

5. As we will see soon, while Gopalakrishnan mentions Rosy's story and the violence against her, Mani centralizes Rosy's life and analyzes it within the complex history of Dalit labor and Dalit history in Malayalam cinema (see Gopalakrishnan, *Cinemayude*).

6. My interview with Kavil Krishnan provides a different version of this story. According to Krishnan, after the violence and attacks against her house, Rosy continued her work for the Kakkarissi plays. Almost a year after *Vigatakumaran*'s screening, Rosy was attacked by dominant caste men on her way back from a Kakkarissi performance near the Karamana bridge, when she was rescued by Kesava Pillai.

7. Various contemporary histories and state manuals record and describe these transformations in Travancore missionary narratives. Often written as memoirs of missionary work in Travancore, these texts focus on the despotic situation in the country due to the caste system and the missionary attempt to fight against "spiritual poverty." They also give detailed accounts of material life and its transitions (Mohan, *Modernity*). Robin Jeffrey's pioneering study of the powerful Nair caste and its decline brings forth questions of caste and power relations.

8. Channar is a community who belong mostly to the Thiruvananthapuram district of Southern Kerala. What used to be referred as the Channar Breast Cloth controversy in colonial scholarship has been recognised as Channar Revolt in recent scholarship (Yesudas 4). Subsequent critical assessment of the historiography of the Channar Revolt argues for recovering the idea of Channars as social agents and as sensory and perceptive beings (Sheeju 313).

9. Secondary literature on theater testifies to these new spaces of Tamil, Sanskrit, and Malayalam theater. They map the formation of a new public in urban centers in the early twentieth century. See Sreekumar, *Malayala Sangeeta Nataka Charithram*.

10. In this special issue, Shailaja Paik's essay, "Mangala Bansode and the Social Life of Tamasha," argues how women performers of the art form negotiated the sexual economy for their own survival and benefits.

11. Pierre Bourdieu defines the unthinkable as that for which one has no adequate instruments to conceptualize: "In the unthinkable of an epoch, there is all that one cannot think for want of ethical or political inclination; at the same time, the unthinkable may also be for want of instruments of thought such as problematics, concepts, methods, and techniques" (224).

12. In an interview that preceded the release of the film, Kamal said, "My curiosity was piqued by Vinu Abraham's book, *Nashta Nayika*, on Rosy, the heroine of *Vigatakumaran*. But I felt that the focus should be on Daniel, now acknowledged as the father of Malayalam cinema. I thought this is one film that ought to be made to remind us of our history" (Kamal qtd. in Nagarajan 11).

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13. Swarnavel Eswaran's essay in this special issue on the recent Tamil language biopic *Periyar*, on the founder of the Tamil self-respect movement and the Dravidar Kazhagam party, points to the inadequacies of the biopic aesthetic and stardom in enacting Periyar's radical politics.
14. Cinema halls have had a long and checkered history of being a contentious site of various conflicts in colonial Andhra Pradesh and in post-partition Delhi as pointed out by S. V. Srinivas and Aarti Sethi, respectively. Discussing a series of hostile caste encounters in Chunduru, Andhra Pradesh, Tharu and Niranjana map the space of the cinema hall as one of caste tensions and, in this particular case, involve a framed case of sexual violence brought by "upper caste" women against Dalit men.
15. For a detailed discussion of these differing notions of the past in Dalit history writing see Mohan, "Religion" and "Creation."
16. Contemporary practices in world cinema gesture toward the reconstitution of history through cinema often through fiction, myth, or ritual. A vast body of work by the Black Audio Film Collective, intercultural cinema/hybrid cinema, and experimental cinema undertake this archaeological exercise of excavation, falsification, and the making of myths. See Marks.
17. Charu Gupta, in her reading of the persuasive and compelling popular Dalit narratives of Dalit Viranganas of 1857, shows how a symbolic redemption takes place in these narratives (*Gender* 86–109).

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CASTE LIFE NARRATIVES, VISUAL REPRESENTATION, AND PROTECTED IGNORANCE

Y. S. ALONE

This essay is an attempt to interrogate certain visual manifestations as a perceptual means of understanding and to approach caste and life narratives from the conceptual framework of "protected ignorance." Caste life narratives are typically regarded as literary works, but they have also become subjects of visual language, wherein experiences of caste life become a means to create visual metaphors as potential critiques of the hegemonic and the normative in dominant Indian society. This essay is concerned with the experiences of caste life and attempts to move away from narratives of "protected ignorance."

Colonial India saw the production of four dominant modes of discourse in understanding Indian history and culture: 1) an imperial discourse in which race and Western superiority were assumed; 2) a Brahmanical discourse mainly rooted in the idea of divinity, an outright trust in textual traditions, and a politics opposed to imperial interpretations; 3) a Marxist/socialist discourse mainly associated with economic interpretations; and 4) a non-Brahmanical discourse displacing the above three. Many of the Indian discursive processes under the colonial conditions were distinctly marked by a Brahmanical dominance located in a political context of nation and nationalism. Brahmanical hegemony produced metanarratives of a nationalist imagination rooted in an intellectual politics of homogenized precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial Indian traditions. Such a process produced the two subjective categories of the political and the moral, rooted in conscious imaginations. As I have discussed elsewhere, B. R. Ambedkar was the first person to offer systematically a critique of the first three dominant discourses listed above from a non-Brahmanical perspective by adhering to the theory of dependent/interdependent origination, or the *pratitya samvutpada* of Buddha.[1]

The imperial discourse gave prominence to a racial theory of superiority and produced a distinctive meaning of power. Even today, the power of the

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West dominates perceptual understandings and worldviews, while the West's authoritarianism allows it to ignore its own beliefs in stereotypes. Perhaps because of its inherent nature, the West has produced white supremacy and "white ignorance," as Charles Mills observes. In her critique of the authoritarian nature of mainstream Western academic knowledge production, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak analyzes the three philosophical traditions of Kant, Hegel, and Marx—along with the psychoanalytical categories that Freud and Lacan proposed—by relying on deconstruction as the main discursive practice of reading. She offers a constructive critique of what she calls "sanctioned ignorance" (*Critique* 2). While stimulating, Spivak's critique does not investigate the inherent nature of "ignorance," which is both embedded in dominant cultural practices and thinking and is produced by a native local hegemony in a country like India. It is imperative to understand knowledge-formation processes and their conceptual frameworks and objectives more deeply. Furthermore, it is critical to understand rationally the intricate connection between societal practices and their governing ideas, such as the sacredness of religious textual traditions and belief systems. One may argue that rationality is relative, but its relativity depends on its objectives. If the objective of rationality is to kill ignorance, then it becomes a righteous rationality, and if it is the opposite, it signifies an unrighteous rationality and, consequently, a "protected ignorance." A critique of "protected ignorance" is a conceptual means to interrogate knowledge formation-processes and their objectives. It is equally aimed at demystifying metanarratives of the claimed theoretical groundings of "sanctioned ignorance."

"Protected ignorance" is a day-to-day phenomenon that is seen in every sphere, including in the creative realms of visuality. Perceptual understandings of visual signifiers, being socially and politically located, are gauges of "protected ignorance." Expressive urges are manifested through language, where language need not mean only an accepted notion of language, but may encompass all possible expressive means and capacities. In this context, "subaltern" as it is understood and applied as a category in India becomes problematic, particularly when it is read against Ambedkar's understandings of caste. Ambedkar defines caste as not only a division of labor but also of laborers. The experience of division of laborers cannot be understood by the nomenclature of "subaltern." "Subaltern," being a generic rubric and more class oriented, does not empower us to understand caste differences and conflicts. Caste entails graded hierarchy, whereby levels of discrimination and exclusion are different in each case.

"Caste life narratives" are often associated with life experiences produced in relation to the social category of caste and are never homogenous

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experiences. Essentially, caste life narrative connotes a literary movement. However, this movement has touched upon all spheres of creative expressions and has also become a part of visual representations. This essay attempts to show how caste life narratives become an agential means to understand visual representations that are markedly different from and also challenge the hegemonic Brahmanical narrative.

I.

While colonial modernity entered Indian conditions as a superior power, art patronage became increasingly popular and gallery space became the new arena of art activity, even as access to such space was restricted based on caste stratification. However, colonials were not challenged by the modernist agenda of "high caste" Indian society. The imperial government established art educational institutes, which sought to break the shackles of Indian society. Ironically, the biggest beneficiary of this endeavor ended up being the caste-Hindu society, which claimed that tradition was sacred and a marker of purity.

Caste-Hindu society used the textual tradition of the past as a tool to reinvent a discursive process that was exclusive and culturally hegemonic. Because of the mobility that colonial modernity offered in artists' traditional occupations, pictorial conventions became hybridized to cater to the colonial administration's interest in getting Indian subjects to accept the cultural superiority of Western tradition. Political power empowered colonial modernity. However, at the level of cultural relics of the past, social norms persisted. Despite education being a decisive tool of initiating rationality, religious ritualistic tradition could never become an object of critique. Due to the objective formulations of knowledge production on the basis of tradition, the institution of *varna* and caste has become an integral part of the sacredness of tradition that cannot be questioned.[2] At the same time, people like Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj of Kolhapur, who financed the education of "untouchables" and "backwards," including art education, envisioned inclusive development.

When religious dogmas entered as pictorial subjects in colonial modernity, there was an exoticization of and belief in the greatness of tradition. Violence is an embedded aspect of caste consciousness, which becomes normative for caste-Hindus (that is, Hindus above the "untouchable" castes). Meanwhile, the notion of spirituality becomes an intervening tool of opposition to the Western critic, as exemplified in defending dogmas of tradition. Philosopher S. Radhakrishnan takes refuge in the chronology of tradition and talks about the continuity of tradition as a great achievement. Radhakrishnan maintains, "The Vedic tradition became surrounded with sanctity, and

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so helped to transmit culture and ensure the continuity of civilization" (18). The likes of Radhakrishnan seek to understand continuity and multiplicity of tradition as a part of an absorption process of the Hindu civilizational state. It is equally important to understand the defense of caste as an institution in his view of Indian society. For caste-Hindus, caste is normative and beyond interrogation. Caste life narratives and their visual manifestations contradict such hegemonic thinking and positions.

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy's writings have been dominant in the field of art history in India and are still taught reverently abroad as the representative perspective of an Eastern-Oriental icon and accepted as the most legitimate source on Indian art. While narrating the historical nature of Indian art, Coomaraswamy successfully advocates the idea of spirituality in *Transformation of Nature in Indian Art* and even defends the tradition of sati (widow burning) as a union of Shiva and Shakti in his essay "Sati: Defense of Eastern Women." Equally crucial in reinforcing hegemony is textual language, which propels a desire to see the cultural object as "spiritual sacred," devoid of any social objectives, conflicts, tensions, and politics. The material cultural object thus became evidence to support the religious textual tradition of Brahmanical superiority. The claimed continuity of tradition has neither been critiqued nor has there been any effort to make the discursive process rational or aimed at killing ignorance. The body of material evidence in the form of sculptures and architectural monuments becomes the preferred modes of disseminating an art tradition in which text is a guiding tool to contextualize the content of art.

Caste life narratives and their representation in visual art have emerged as antithetical to such a homogenized Brahmanical understanding of Indian art. Cultural difference displaces the discursive process of homogeneity of tradition. Attempts to reconstruct the past as well as its cultural residues from a non-colonial as well as a non-Brahmanical perspective can become intervening tools of investigation and understanding, and directly challenge the political project of homogeneity of tradition. When the oppressed challenge homogenizing discourses through caste life narratives in text and in art, they enable a shift of focus from the textual tradition of a Brahmanical past. The oppressed formulate a language of caste narratives distinct from conventional understandings of the hegemonic group. Given that language has already been rendered hegemonic in every sphere of life, it is the task of the oppressed to carve out a different language, written and pictorial, that is rational and aimed at killing ignorance.

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule (1827–1890) and B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956) were instrumental in enacting a paradigmatic shift from a mere

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acknowledgment of the dogmatisms of tradition to the ineffectiveness of ritual practices as legitimized in religious texts. For Ambedkar, the political project of fighting untouchability meant not only to question the exclusive nature of caste practices and traditions, but also to underline their self-centered proclamations and political designs that religious texts sanctioned. Additionally, he brought out the ways in which cultural behaviors were reflected through a series of behaviors dictated by caste. While presenting a critique of *varna* and caste, Ambedkar also states that "caste is a perversion of *varna*," which explains the embedded connection between *varna* and caste as a hierarchical, unequal system that cannot be deemed as an ideal social system (3: 146). Ambedkar critiques caste as hierarchy and further observes the distinction between rules and principles: "Rules are practical; they are habitual ways of doing things according to prescription. But principles are intellectual; they are useful methods of judging things. Rules seek to tell an agent just what course of action to pursue. Principles do not prescribe a specific course of action" (1: 75). Through religion, as a set of rules and principles of command, Ambedkar analyzes the idea of caste as power: "What is called Religion by the Hindus is nothing but a multitude of commands and prohibitions" (1: 75).

Ambedkar's engagements with the modernity project question the rationale of behavioral practices of caste-Hindus. He systematically dissects the corpus of Brahmanical textual tradition and, consequently, completely rejects the conventional idea of the "Gupta period" as a "golden age."[4] He rejects Brahmanical cultural nationalism as a basis of understanding, regarding it as a methodological tool to maintain intellectual dominance. Brahmanical cultural nationalism failed to create any fraternity and address the social injustices that were inflicted on "lower caste" communities in India, such as being labeled "untouchable," falling at the bottom of the caste hierarchy itself, being subordinate in the nation's government, and being excluded from nation-building. Thus, Ambedkar's task was to offer a discursive process of displacing Brahmanical hegemony and to provide an alternative framework based on rationality, pragmatism, and political morality. This idea of Ambedkar's discursive process later generated numerous caste life narratives that became stumbling blocks for the dominant discourse of nationalism.

II.

Ambedkar also understood the limitations of Marxism in addressing cultural practices, as he discusses in the essay "Buddha or Karl Marx." He observes that socialists in India followed a European economic interpretation of history. In "Annihilation of Caste," he writes:

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> They propound that man is an economic creature, that his activities and aspirations are bound by economic facts, that property is the only source of power. They, therefore, preach that political and social reforms are but gigantic illusions and that economic reform by equalization of property must have precedence over every other kind of reform. (1: 44)

Ambedkar further drew attention to the power of religion and how Indian caste society was consciously following caste rules as religious duties. Caste life narratives, as literary products and pictorial representations, produce a critique of the power of religion.

The concept of divinity, attached to the origin and existence of caste, has a meaningful social implication in advocating a Brahmanical perception of the present and the past. The artisan community of Prajapati is designated as belonging to that divine architect, but in reality the *varna-jati* division never allows such artisan social groups to have the same power in the realm of social behavior as that of the divine being, or for that matter, the same status as that of a Brahmin or a Kshatriya. Even during the postcolonial period, such irony hardly gets discussed in the intellectual domain. As Shete Vaijayanti demonstrates in "Expressive Theory of Caturvarnya and the *Shilpa* Texts: References to Caste and Gender," all the Shilpa texts, for example treatises on art and architecture, have profoundly categorized differences in various media on the basis of *varna* formulations, including the advocacy of image worship as per the *varnas*. Their theoretical conception is based on the four-fold division of *varnas* society, which has gone into the making of their aesthetic perception.

Modernity had multiple strands and manifestations in the colonial period. At the political level, it was a struggle to advocate democracy as a modern means to espouse nation and nationality, as it went hand in hand with cosmetic adaptations of caste-based society without bringing any social change. A mere adoption of formalism in pictorial language denied the very principle of modernity, as modernity is associated with a rejection of hierarchical values and adherence to equality. Indian painters formulated a modernity that did not create space for an interrogation of cultural caste practices. Consequently, modernity needs to be reinvestigated as a systemic tool for maintaining power relationships that operate within caste hierarchy. While tradition, as put forth by the Brahmanical reconstruction of the cultural past, negates the ideas of critical modernity, Sanskritization, under the banner of modernity, generates a debate regarding cultural modernity that is confined to an urban-centric idea of tradition's greatness. Urban and non-urban have become a subject of discussion in the pictorial language.

Dominant Brahmanical understandings underscore life narratives and representations of M. K. Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) in the realm of art. The

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idea of village society, as Gandhi advocated, remains one of romantic realism and does not address caste perceptions. Village India as a social category has been subject to Orientalism and thus reduced to highly exoticized representations. Given how influential Gandhi remains and the pervasiveness of such reductive representations, it becomes clear how difficult it would be for an artist to think from a non-Gandhian perspective and, consequently, how caste narrative could not become and is not a subject of dominant pictorial language. It is in this context that the Gandhi-Ambedkar debates are revealing. While both men are located in a colonial modernity, Gandhi adheres to *varnashramadharma* (caste society), whereas Ambedkar is committed to the destruction of the caste-*varna* model.

Intellectual and creative realms are directly and indirectly connected with caste-Hindu perceptions. Even so-called progressives, including socialists and liberals in the fields of creative writing and art practice, have endorsed the idea of superiority based on caste. As I have discussed elsewhere, the general intellectual sphere of "high caste" dominates artists and intellectual caste-Hindus' worldviews, wherein the self-centered, normative, and unchanged representation of the new nation is not questioned. This static caste perception dominates both the intellectual and creative realms to the extent that it becomes difficult, perhaps even impossible, for one to differentiate between the modernist project of Gandhi-Jawaharlal Nehru and that of Phule-Ambedkar. Ambedkar vehemently opposed Gandhian perceptions of morality, which were based on following caste duties as a supreme way of living. The caste-Hindu modernist uncritically absorbed Gandhi's cultural nationalism. Such hegemonic conceptions percolated in the minds of many because of the deep roots in Brahmanical reconstructions, and many people had no problem accepting Gandhi as the sole representative of freedom struggle. Radhakrishnan finds in Gandhi a persona that represents the tradition of honesty and duty, stating, "From Ṛṣis of the Upaniṣads down to Tagore and Gandhi, the Hindu has acknowledged that truth wears vestures of many colors and speaks in strange tongues" (36). Further, G. Alyosius explains:

> The political process in colonial India was dichotomous in an ideal-typical sense: the traditionally dominant communities of Brahmins and allied upper-castes brought together in terms of newly created economic and political interests, raised the slogan of nationalism when the British attempted to withdraw their exclusive patronage. (216)

The nationalist class, predominantly caste-Hindus, failed to see caste as a problem and closed their minds against any anti-caste sensibilities, including caste life narratives.

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The discursive process of interpretation/understanding was narrativized in the projection of Gandhi as the Father of the Nation. There is no difference and no oppositional logic between the modernist and the postcolonial since both of their desires have often been to eulogize Gandhi. Because images of Gandhi appear as a part of the nationalist metanarrative of struggling for freedom, all images of Gandhi in the public domain can position him as a figure of struggles for freedom. Even today, quite a number of artists have painted Gandhi in a celebratory mode. A contemporary painter, Sudhanshu Sutar, paints Gandhi walking on a pointed saw, whereas in another painting, he uses the gardener's watering can to signal his dedication to community. According to Sutar, "When Gandhi was shot dead, the first person who held Gandhi was the gardener whose name was Raghu Nayak and he was from my village. Raghu Nayak happened to be the first witness in the Gandhi murder case, and yet nobody talks about him. The story of Raghu Nayak is told among our community with lot of reverence." Though Sutar could easily relate to Gandhi's image, the same could not be said for Mahatma Phule, who was also from the gardener caste and was radical in his thinking and functioning. When asked about Phule, Sutar says, "I do not know about Mahatma Phule but I shall study him." Sutar's lack of knowledge about Phule may indicate how dominant Brahmanical discourse has not allowed Indians to know people like Phule and Ambedkar who also stand socially and culturally for social transformation.

Intellectuals involved in knowledge production often create a discourse of "protected ignorance," and the dominant narrative and representation of Gandhi in colonial and postcolonial writings and in art symbolizes this "protected ignorance." Akeel Bilgrami and many others have showered considerable love on Gandhian ethics. While situating Gandhi, Bilgrami says, "I repeat that on his lips and pen, the question and the anxiety about the transformation of the concept of nature into the concept of natural resources was an essentially religious person's question and anxiety." Bilgrami further states, "With this aim of generality in place, let me, then, turn to saying something to situate the very issues that Gandhi was raising in a more secular idiom and philosophy than his, stressing more the notion of *value* in nature than the notion of *sacred* or the spiritual in nature" (27, emphasis in original). Bilgrami did not see any contradiction or problem in analyzing Gandhi's ethics. For example, in the 1921 October issue of *Young India*, Gandhi declared himself to be a Sanatani (orthodox) Hindu and voiced his firm belief in the *shastras* (sacred religious texts) and in the institution of caste and *varna*. Caste positions have often assumed considerable importance in hermeneutic understandings. However, caste narratives empower readers to rethink the whole

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Figure 1. Top: Ramkinker Baiz, *Gandhi after Pune Karar*, cement, 1953–55, size with pedestal approximately 13.6 feet. Bottom: detail. Photo by Professor Snjoy Mallik, Kalabhavan, Shantiniketan.

idea of human value and question the ethicality of caste-Hindus.

Ramkinker Baiz and Dalit artists through their own lived experiences and caste life narratives, have challenged dominant representations of Gandhi. Baiz, a sculptor from Bengal, showed courage to be different and did not allow his consciousness to accept the normative understanding of Gandhi. Between 1953 and 1955, he created a huge sculpture of Gandhi in the premises of Shantiniketan University (Fig. 1). He created a number of key models as a precursor to this sculpture. Baiz's large rendering of Gandhi—which literally depicts Gandhi on a pedestal and with a human skull under his foot—remains the sole example from a modernist who refuses to accept Gandhi's persona as that of an extraordinary person. According to Baiz, "Gandhi became Mahatma by crushing people." Baiz made this statement when Ritwik Ghatak made a documentary showing Baiz before the colossal image of Gandhi, explaining the importance of the human skull.[5] Baiz decodes Gandhian achievements by placing the skull under the feet of a tall, towering Gandhi. The sculptor's deliberate intervention is rooted in pragmatic understanding and not in romanticizing this icon of the freedom struggle. Baiz therefore harshly critiques the idea of Gandhi as a figure of "nonviolence." Baiz's image of Gandhi is conceptualized through a formalistic engagement and offers a different reading of Gandhi that challenges Brahmanical representations.

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III.

As delineated above through the example of Gandhi, modern art practices in India remained Brahmanical in their thinking and practice, thereby adhering to the ideas associated with "protected ignorance." Modern Indian art practices have engaged more with formalism, and very few have shown an inclination toward political themes and subjects. The "Place for People" exhibition has been pivotal in representing Indian modernity as a return to narrative figurative expressions. Those involved in the exhibition claimed to be painting and representing the life of the working class, but they failed to adequately question their own self or positionality, and thus, caste was not a category of intervention in their pictorial thinking. The modernity that was being taught and practiced by these artists continued to be a "Brahmanical modernity," which would always be legitimized when the dominant hegemonic group dictated the nature of aesthetic canons. As I argue above, "protected ignorance" has been a part of Brahmanical meta-narrative, and consequently, neither a caste narrative nor a critique of hegemony could emerge as part of an alternative thinking.

Caste life narratives, however, reveal structures of power as well as subjugations, and also empower us to interrogate the "rules" and "principles" as Ambedkar proposed. Ambedkar's followers began to think differently and attacked the very canons of language in art communities. For example, caste life narratives emerged as a powerful medium of expression in the Marathi literary circle that shook the consciousness of readers. However, a similar caste life narrative in modern and contemporary art practices had to wait until the emergence of Savi Sawarkar, who painted caste life narratives. Later, a few more came forward who also challenged the way caste was conceived of in visual art, and they started seriously questioning the ongoing aesthetic canons. These included artists like J. Nandakumar, Jaya Daronde, Pavan Kumar, Prakash Gaikwad, Sudharak Owle, Prajapati, Lokesh Khodke, Malvika, Rajaneesh, Navneet, Vinu, and Baiju.

Among writings on Dalit art, Gary Michael Tartakov's edited book *Dalit Art and Visual Imagery* is a pioneering attempt to discuss imagery in visual art that Dalits have produced. In spite of its various strengths, the book is devoid of alternative representations of Dalits, discussions of differences, or even experiences of conflicts. The book's limitations are disappointing because caste life narratives, as reflected in Dalit art, not only challenge modernity in India, but also interrogate the nomenclature of "subaltern" and the idea of "post-colonial." In the rest of the essay, I take examples from the works of various Dalit and non-Dalit artists who, through their personal experiences of caste, repudiate, ridicule, and critique Brahmanical hegemony in their art.

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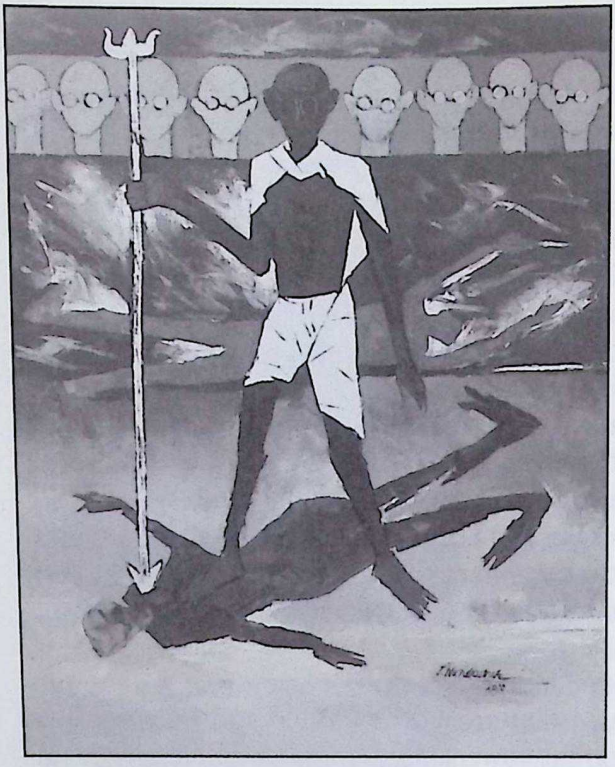

Figure 2. J. Nandakumar, *Gandhi after Pune Karar*, acrylic on canvas, 54 inches x 66 inches, 2010. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

J. Nandakumar's works exemplify how the personal experience of oppression can become a fundamental tool in working against "protected ignorance." Nandakumar belongs to an Ambedkarite family and received a BFA in drawing and painting from the Government School of Arts, Aurangabad, Maharashtra. Nandakumar studied modernist ways of painting and turned out to be a fabulous abstract painter. Despite his poor conditions, he pursued his education and interest in art and confronts the dominant caste groups throughout his education. Because of the discrimination he endured, Nandakumar rethought his painting practices and ended up connecting with Sawarkar, who emerged as an important figure in Indian contemporary art. Nandakumar's constant engagements with his own society and many literary youngsters made him rethink societal values. His disagreements with Gandhi's ideals, which the Ambedkarite community in the state of Maharashtra also shared, became his artistic point of departure.[6]

Dalits' everyday caste narratives generate a sense of disgust within caste-Hindu society. Nandakumar paints *Gandhi after Pune Karar* (Fig. 2) to express this disgust. Interestingly, only one photograph is in circulation among the Ambedkarite community on the Poona Pact, showing Ambedkar and others standing beside Ambedkar's car in front of the Yervada prison in Pune. There

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was one popular oleograph in circulation nearly three decades ago showing Ambedkar and others signing the Poona Pact. It is painted in a realist style, imagining what it may have looked like when the pact was signed. However, Nandakumar is the first gallery artist to paint this theme. Recalling the historical pact between Gandhi and Ambedkar, Nandakumar paints Gandhi not as a crusader of nationalist narratives but as a destroyer of political rights for the scheduled castes. Gandhi and the Congress opposed the demand that Ambedkar put forth for the political rights of the depressed communities in the form of separate electorates. A fundamental question would be the following—is the subject (in this case the scheduled caste of India) so blind that it would not speak against the politically charged morality of suppression? The history of the Round Table Conference tells us that the Indian National Congress had agreed to the communal award for Muslims and others, but refused the same for the scheduled castes. Nandakumar creates a pictorial representation of Gandhi as a lean and thin person, the way he was, posing in the foreground. In the background, he paints a flat reclining traumatized image of a Dalit whose distress is evident by his posture (Fig. 2). Gandhi has trampled upon the other body of a Dalit painted in the foreground, and Gandhi's walking stick is converted into a trident and a lance piercing into the body of the Dalit, signifying a systemic, traumatic death of the oppressed. Gandhi has multiple heads shown in a horizontal tier. This representation of multiple heads is drawn from mythic figural representations (like the multiheaded Rudra or Shiva and the ten-headed Ravana of the Ramayana), and Gandhi is portrayed as a caricature of tradition. The trauma that Dalit artists experience inform a field of pictorial signifiers, and in this case also allow the artist and the viewer to revisit the historical event of the Poona Pact. Nandakumar claims that the painting represents his reaction after reading the Poona Pact between Ambedkar and Gandhi. Remembering is an attempt to revisit trauma, and in this case remembering is a continued process of expressing displeasure toward Gandhi and others. Nandakumar's image of Gandhi gave rise to a storm in the Mumbai art world. His exhibition was shut down. Neither critics nor custodians of opposition to censorial cultural policing in India came forward to discuss his work or even bothered to acknowledge it.

In a recently painted second version (Fig. 3), Nandakumar reads Gandhi differently, painting him like the Hindu god Shiva though Gandhi was a devout Vaishnavite. A snake coming out of his neck and frightening a Dalit marks a striking representation of oppression, fear, and the might of caste-Hindus, whose hate for "lower castes" is deeply embedded and operates as an invisible reality. This painting is a powerful representation of Gandhi in the minds of Ambedkarites, who reject being a part of Gandhism. It also

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Figure 3. J. Nandakumar, *Gandhi after Pune Karar II*, acrylic on canvas, 3 feet x 4 feet, 2011. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

signifies events in the political sphere of post-independence India where Gandhi's Harijan ideology condemns Dalits to supplicate to the Congress Party (with which Gandhi was associated) with a begging bowl forever.

As discussed earlier, modernist painters have not addressed caste in their pictorial representations, as their artistic pedagogies and political understandings would prevent them from doing so. Sawarkar happened to be the first gallery artist who challenged the very discourse of Brahmanical cosmetic modernity and its aesthetic canons. Sawarkar is from Nagpur and studied drawing and painting at the Government Chitrakala Mahavidhyalaya, Nagpur, for his bachelor's degree. Part of the Ambedkarite movement, Sawarkar finely observes the naked realities of caste life. His own life narrative became a repository of events; he visualized his own caste narratives as a point of departure from what was expected of him. Sawarkar assigns his own iconographic symbols to the social identity of the "untouchable" community. By aiming to challenge viewers with his volatile images that disrupt perceptions of caste-Hindus, Sawarkar's art becomes inherently political in the way it upsets social

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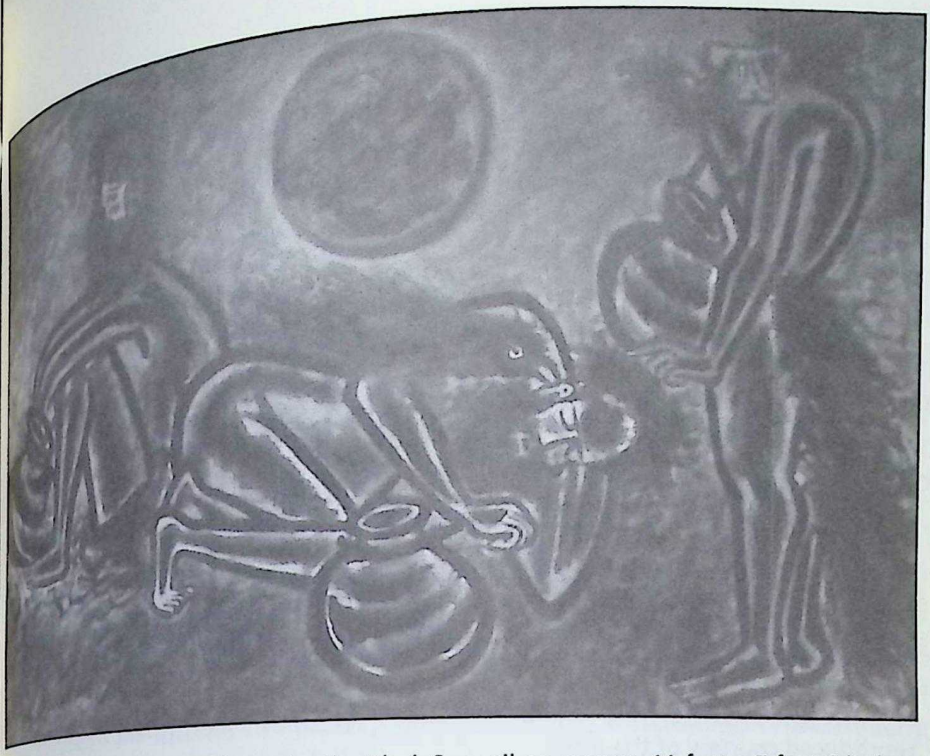

Figure 4. Savi Sawarkar, *Untouchables under the Black Sun*, oil on canvas, 11 feet x 5 feet 6 inches, 2000. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

and aesthetic norms, especially given that his personal intervention had its genesis in how he portrayed his community. By the time Sawarkar started painting, Dalit life narratives had emerged as a powerful means to explore the world of caste realities.

Untouchables under the Black Sun is a telling work that makes a profound statement on the abject poverty of "untouchable" communities and their miserable condition of living i166n open spaces (Fig. 4). The black sun is a symbolic representation of the darkness in daylight that forbids "untouchables" any freedom, though the sun is usually a general symbol of hope because its emanation of light and energy is crucial to everyone's survival. But in the life of the "untouchable," no such luxury exists. Though it operates at an imaginary level, the image equally aims to remind caste-Hindus of a glaring physical and material fact of life of an untouchable, where freedom is completely absent from their life. It is interesting to see a parallel in the caste life narrative from Laxman Mane, the author of *Upara*. Mane's narrative shows the starving condition of his community living on the outskirts of society and on the garbage of both the village and the city. In a similar manner, Sawarkar's painting shows a narrative of caste life and the ways in which a particular caste has to survive even in a postcolonial situation.

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Figure 5. Savi Sawarkar, *Dalit Pissing on Manu*, oil on canvas, 10 feet x 6 feet, 1991. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

Many elements contributed to Sawarkar's evolution as an artist. Sawarkar listened to a song by Tulsiram, a professor in Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi: *manu mahā thagvā ham janire aur kaisā kaisā rās rasāiye* (Manu was a great cheater, we have realized how he played tricks). On listening to this song, Sawarkar realized how Manu was a villain to Dalits and others.[7] Around 1990, there was a large-scale attack on Dalits near Agra. When Sawarkar visited the location, he was filled with anger and hate regarding caste and its legitimacy. He discovered how heinous Manu and his ideas about caste were, and how these ideas of hierarchy, in human's treatment of socially lowered communities, generating hate and violence, are present in the everyday narratives of caste-Hindus. Sawarkar's series on Manu offers a visual representation of the past and the present. For him, Ambedkar becomes a cardinal figure of inspiration who critiqued Manu in the strongest possible manner. *Dalit Pissing on Manu* is indicative of how the Ambedkarite society rejected Manu (Fig. 5). An image is inherently symbolic; at the same time it is equally real. There is a desire to create an imagery that will not be transcendental but more physical and real. Symbolism, in this case, denotes the caste-Hindu who is absent in the pictorial space but is part and parcel of the violence that is imposed, codified, and practiced as a societal norm.

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Ambedkar's and other Dalits' conversion to Buddhism in 1956 at Nagpur was pivotal, forcing Dalit Buddhists to distinguish their own cultural symbols and signifiers from Brahmanical conventions. Sawarkar's ability to draw rapidly with minimal details and bold lines, which he acquired as an art student, is a hallmark of his skilled labor. Sawarkar attempted to create an image that would signify the historic 1956 event, while pictorializing the *varna* hierarchy of Indian society. Through a process of continual reflection and by deploying a creative vocabulary, Sawarkar painted *Foundation of India* (Fig. 6), a work that represents the residues of the past and the transformational, structural change that he desires for society. The four-fold division of the *varna* system is represented through conventional symbols. The image of the male is conceptualized, as has been advocated in the *purushsutta* of the Rigveda. The top head signifies a Brahman, the arms as weapons denote the Kshatriyas, whereas the potbelly represents wealthy trading. The feet represent the Shudras. Sawarkar does not stop here. He shows bells hooked to the garland tied at the bottom, denoting "untouchables." The last block is also broken and moving on wheels toward Buddhism, showing the *ati-shudra*, the term that Mahatma Phule advocated for instead of "untouchable." Being witness to the ongoing celebration and conversion at Dikshbhoomi Nagpur had a deep impact on Sawarkar's worldview. He systematically observed his surroundings and how caste life was key to the violence and pain of life. His self-narrative, touching on caste, is reflected through the series of paintings he made on these issues.

The other important theme Sawarkar painted is related to devadasis (a tradition whereby an adolescent girl from a scheduled caste, such as a Dalit or "lower caste" community, is married to the temple in the village and consequently the Brahmin priest and the caste-Hindu patron sexually exploit the girl under the religious custom). Sawarkar visited Soundati in Karnataka in 1985, after completing his postgraduate studies from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda. He first visited Narayan Surve in Mumbai and discovered many devadasis in the red-light district in Grant Road, Mumbai. The devadasis had largely come from Soundati, an area that Sawarkar visited. He initially saw a festival of giving away green saris and bangles to the adolescent girls from the scheduled caste community. He listened to all their ritualistic songs. He witnessed that one devadasi could not even walk properly. It bewildered him and he later discovered that this was due to inflammation around the genitals. Sawarkar lived in disguise with a long beard and initially slept in an open tea stall and later rented a house near the temple. He was a regular visitor to the temple and witnessed the initiation ceremony of the devadasis and how they were sexually exploited. It was a mental trauma for Sawarkar to witness such practices. He saw how an old Brahmin priest would have sex

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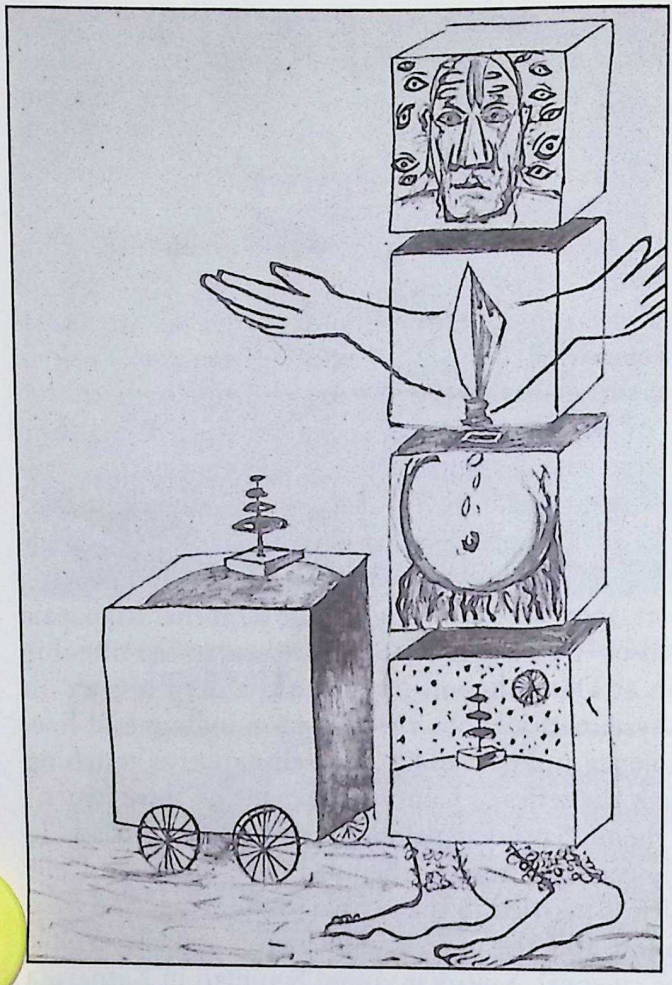

Figure 6. Savi Sawarkar, *Foundation of India*, oil on canvas, 5 feet x 6 feet, 1986. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

with a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old girl as a part of the devadasi tradition and later how the girl would be used constantly by a caste-Hindu patron. It angered Sawarkar and he realized that all the devadasis were from scheduled caste communities. He recorded the life narratives of devadasis quietly. When temple authorities realized that Sawarkar did not belong to their fraternity, Sawarkar left the place and later met Uttam Kamble, who wrote on devadasis in Marathi, producing a source book and a firsthand account of the devadasi tradition, *Devadasi Ani Nagnapujā*. The same devadasi paid visits to Dikshabhoomi at Nagpur, where they became Buddhists. Sawarkar witnessed these events. This traumatization of Dalit women and girls in the name of religious practices, rituals, and belief systems angered Sawarkar, who foregrounded these women and girls as the subjects of his paintings as an act of resistance to

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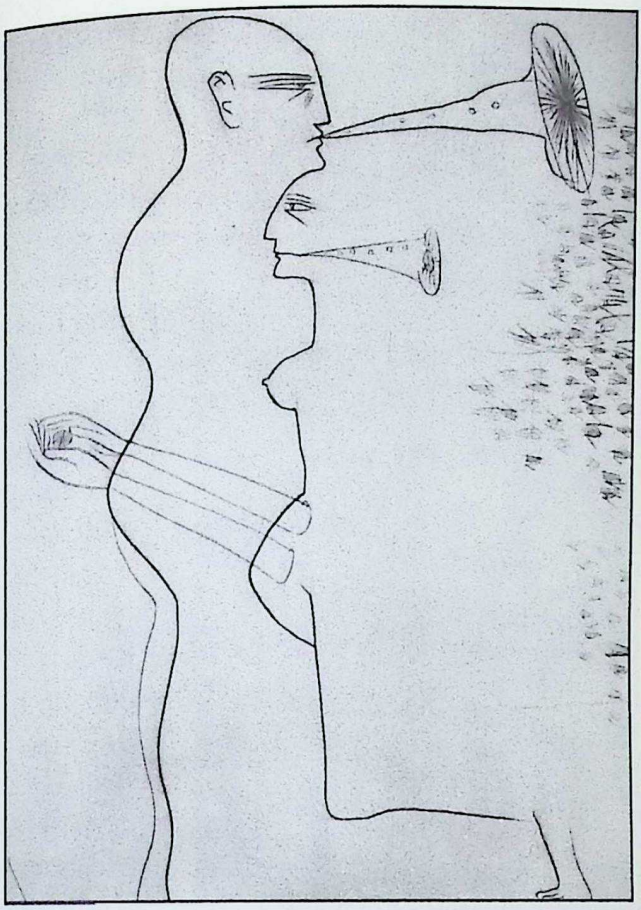

Figure 7. Savi Sawarkar, *Freedom to Devadasi*, dry point, 54.5 cm x 37 cm, 2001 © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

voice their pain. As an Ambedkarite, Sawarkar chose to represent this trauma to critique caste-Hindu consciousness.

Sawarkar's earlier works on devadasis had a different narrative quality, showing cardinal events, emphasizing the caste-narrative ordeal through tormenting sexual exploitations. Many viewers found his works extremely hard hitting. In his later works, elements of caste violence take a different turn. Without compromising his quality of expression, Sawarkar's endeavor to critique caste explores the language of minimalism, loaded with a background of caste narratives. A devadasi is shown escaping from the body of a Brahmin (Fig. 7). Here embracement has a dual meaning. One is the control of Brahmins over other social orders. The second meaning is connected with the lust of a Brahmin who would not like a devadasi to be free from his control. Perversion is a fundamental aspect of sexuality when it comes to the heinous practice of devadasi. The Brahmin's embrace of the devadasi is indicative of the Brahmanical control over her body, and at the same time, the devadasi extending her hand out of the Brahmin body and holding to the *dhammachakra* (wheel of law shown as spokes of a wheel) shows the possibility of her

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Figure 8. Savi Sawarkar, *Devadasi with Crow*, etching, 40 cm x 28 cm, 1987. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

freedom. It is important to understand how the complex nature of sexuality operates through a religious institution and the way it is nurtured as a part of male dominance over pleasure, whereby an adolescent girl is initiated as a devadasi who is first enjoyed by the priest and later by the chief patron, usually the landlord.

One may recall the ways in which psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakkar analyzes the nature of upbringing in Indian society in *The Inner World*. For Kakkar, the ideal of a Hindu household involves following the Rama-Sita model. However, the tradition and practice of devadasi completely undoes the Rama-Sita ideal in Indian society. The mythic becomes an ideal that does not get critiqued under protected ignorance. The moral self becomes embedded in a caste-ridden perception and the ideals of caste living. In fact, the Puranic tradition and larger Hindu traditions do not allow followers to be enlightened beings, as there is a fear that there would be a collapse of "agency," which would lead to the egoist male not being able to exercise sexual perversions. The life of a devadasi is traumatic. Sawarkar depicts their trauma through the physicality of the body—a desired and yet mutilated body. Devadasis go through a series of abortions. Sawarkar captures a graphic representation of this by showing the static body with a surgical cut mark on the stomach (Fig. 8).

Jaya Daronde paints the lived relationship between a Brahmin male and an "untouchable" girl (Fig. 9). Though it is not directly related to Jaya's life experiences, her work invokes caste life narratives of observed realities that go into a perceptual understanding of creating an image that is loaded with caste narrative itself. She attempts to show a kind of psychological unrest between two human beings, despite their being emotionally and physically in love with each other. Daronde's large body of work explores various dimensions of this relationship and the ways in which the Dalit female is structured in the

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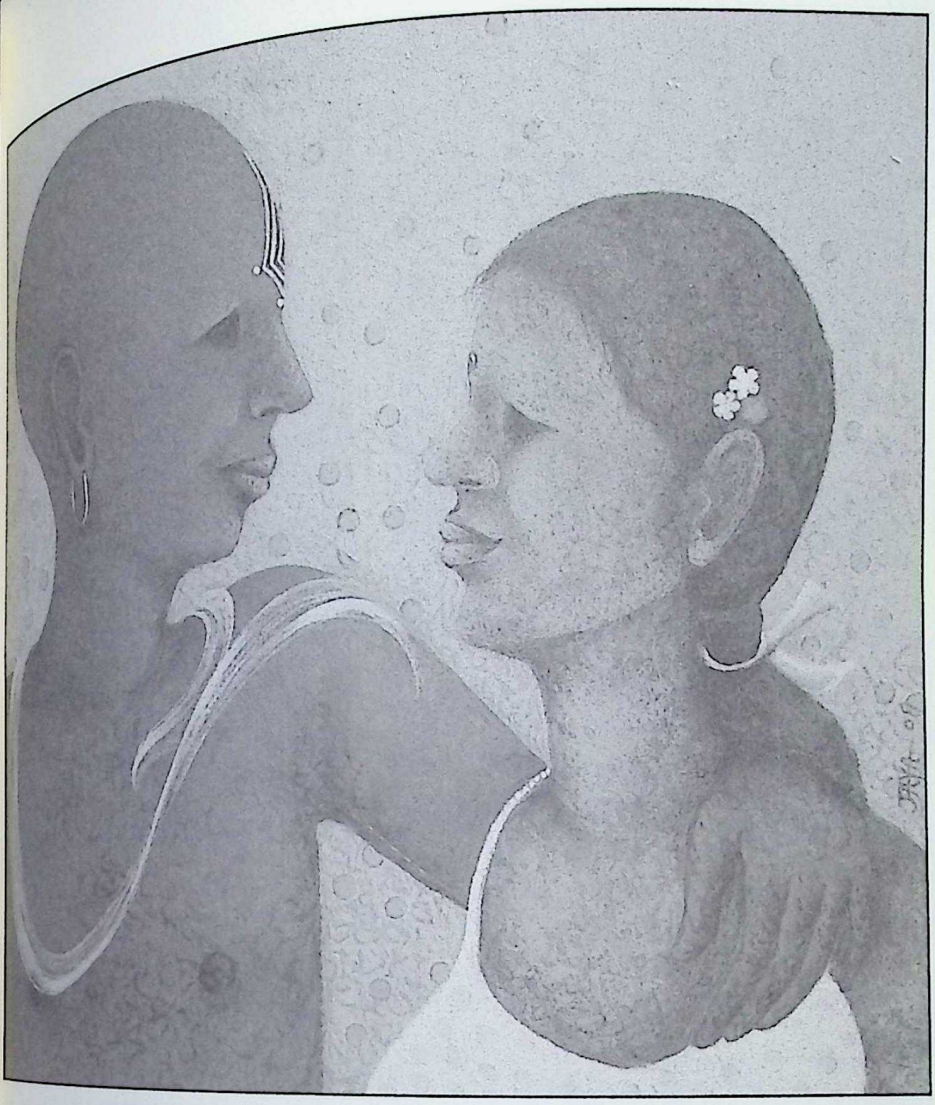

Figure 9. Jaya Daronde, *Relationship*, oil on canvas, 18 inches x 18 inches, 2009. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

patriarchal world. Daronde's figures are simple and have no sexual overtones. There is a deliberate attempt on her part to go away from the usual sensual representations of the Dalit female body. In her work, caste life tensions are observed as part of social realities. Textures in the pictorial surface of Daronde's paintings are decorative in nature and reflect everyday existence. Some of her work shows groups of women involved in themselves in a manner that declares their independent existence away from the collective caste-Hindus.

Intervention on issues of caste is not just confined to one section of the community. When others venture into such a thematic expression, viewers are offered another side of caste practices. Lokesh Khodke produced a few

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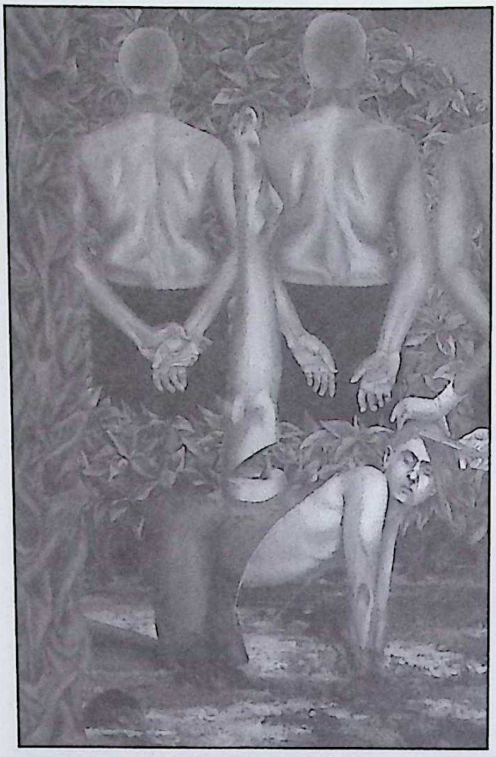

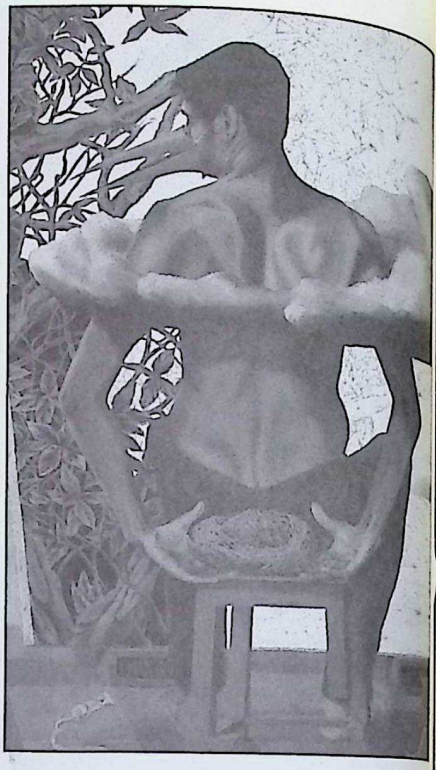

Figure 10 (left). Lokesh Khodke, *The Theater of a Painter*, oil on canvas, 48 inches x 72 inches, 2008. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

Figure 11 (right). Lokesh Khodke, *The Legacy*, oil on canvas, 48 inches x 72 inches, 2007. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

paintings after his engagement with an Ambedkarite NGO. When Khodke was exposed to the writings of Phule and Ambedkar, he found his own Brahmanical tradition extremely problematic and draconian in nature. His painting on Trivikrama is an apt example of the brutality with which the imagery of Trivikrama is guarded by the Brahmin household (Figs. 10 and 11).[8] This work of art exhibits how the Brahmin family reveres the myth of Trivikrama and how, despite understanding its violent nature, they are taught not to critique it because of the supposed sacredness of Brahmanical traditions.

Pavan's engagement with caste narrative took a long time to evolve. As a part of graphic design practices, he preferred to draw decorative figures with certain caste affiliations. A priest's head upon legs and a broom is a graphic representation of the caste divide in Haryana society (Fig. 12). In another work, a cow with a priest's head is shown as a political critique of the Hindu

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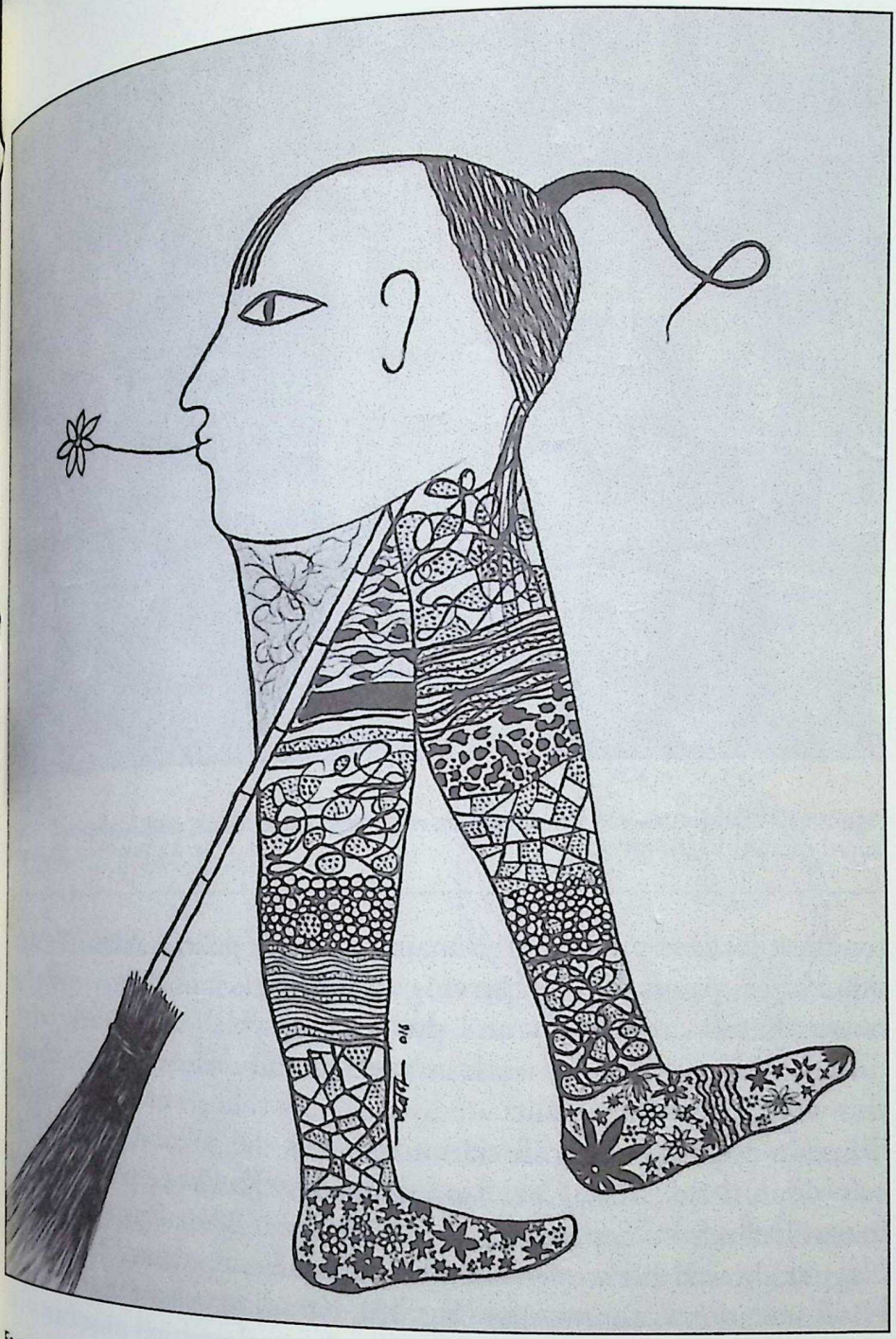

Figure 12. Pawan Kumar, *untitled*, acrylic on canvas, 24 inches x 36 inches, 2015. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

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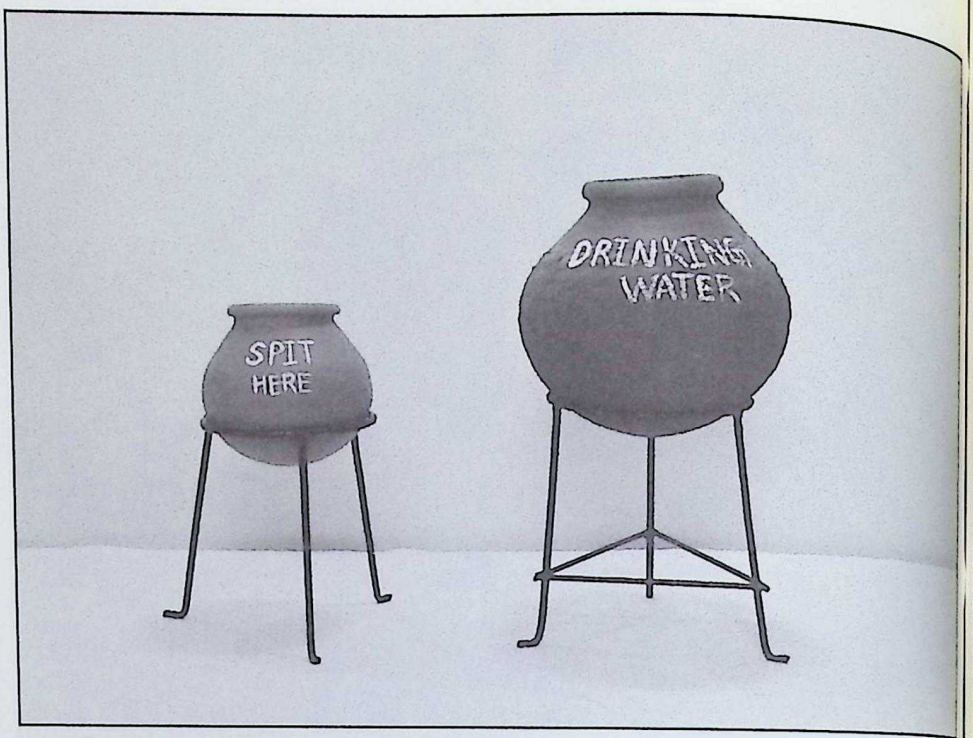

Figure 13. Prakash Gaikwad, *Nostalgia* (installation), mixed media, 2016. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

fondness for cow protection, a mainstay in the politics of India. Vishnu, another artist, paints a Dalit carrying a saffron trident on a scooter, which represents Kerala's modernity and the ways in which specific caste groups are used to carry out menial work in caste-Hindu society. Political overtones in this work reflect how Dalits are used as foot soldiers of caste-Hindu society. Thus, an everyday caste life narrative enters the political sphere. In a recent exhibition titled "Tear, Cut, Rip," curated by Kanika Gupta and Rohit Ukey in east Delhi from September 25 to October 1, 2016, Prakash Gaikwad from Nagpur showed his work, based on caste life narratives of "untouchability." His installation is noteworthy (Fig. 13). Knowing well the fact that "untouchability" exists in Indian society and that societal practices still adhere to caste "untouchability," he placed two earthen pots in the installation. The bigger earthen pot had the words "drinking water" and the small earthen pot had written on it "spit here." These signs represent the continued cultural practices of "untouchability" in independent India, undermining societal claims of civility and liberty. The installation was also a reminder of a well-known

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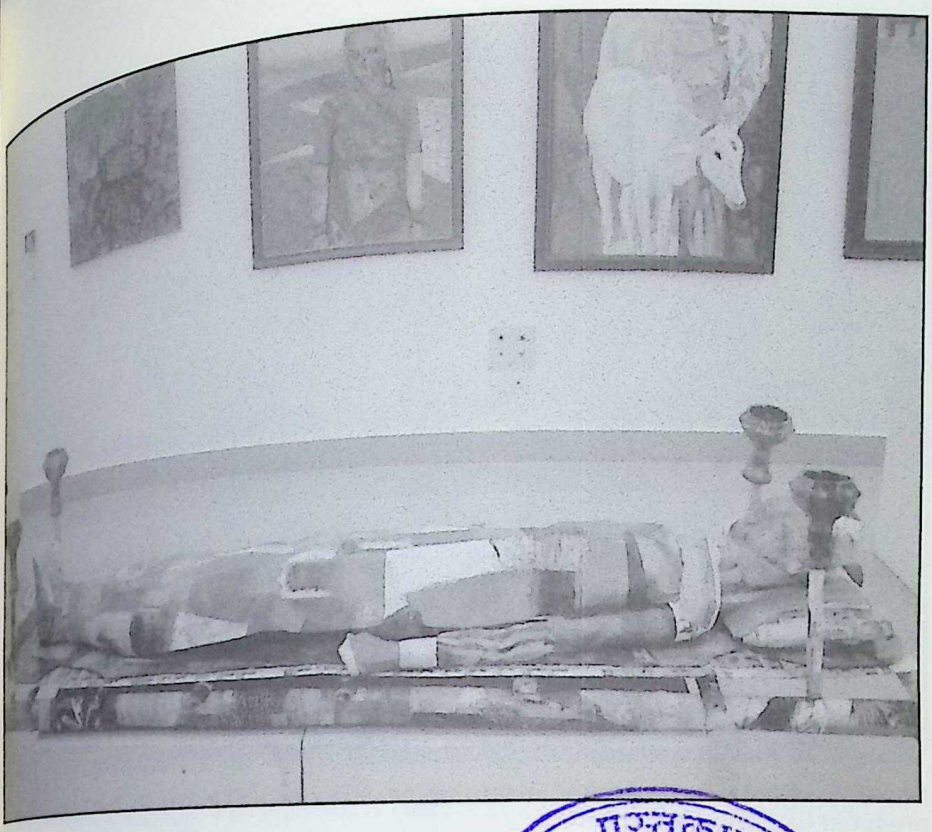

Figure 14. Prajapati, *Installation*, mixed media, 80 inches x 33 inches x 28 inches, 2012. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

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incident from Ambedkar's life when he was working in Baroda Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad's office. Ambedkar was given a separate earthen pot to drink water from in the office. Evoking caste life narrative becomes a necessary means to express the realities of Indian psychotic perversions like this episode from Ambedkar's life.

Prajapati is another artist who referred to his own life narrative when he critiqued caste-Hindu cultural practices, this time of cremations at the banks of the river Ganga at Varanasi (Fig. 14). He used the motif of the cremation bed with a currency note painted on it to refer to the practice that goes in the making of the *bhataji-shethaji* (priest and trading community) nexus. Prajapati, being from a "backward caste" community and sensitized to Ambedkarite consciousness, dared to present a pictorial critique of the caste-Hindu belief system. He depicts generic objects used at the time of cremation for covering dead bodies such as four flame lamps attached with sticks and the bier (bamboo bed to carry the dead body).

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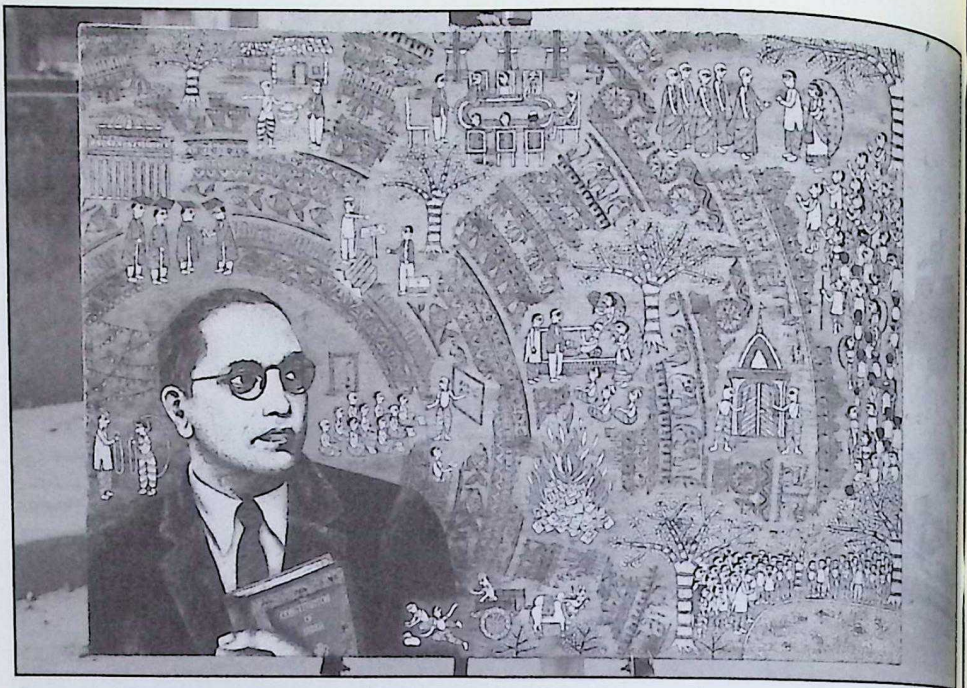

Figure 15. Malvika, *Dr. Ambedkar*, monochrome, 30 inches x 40 inches, 2016. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

Malvika, a painter from Bihar who studied fashion design, uses the Madhubani tradition to paint Ambedkar's life narrative (Fig. 15). The lower left corner of her painting is dominated by a big portrait of Ambedkar holding the constitution, and his other life events are depicted in the surrounding area. She preferred to choose known events, mainly the caste humiliations that Ambedkar faced, his education at Columbia University, his marriage, the Mahad tank agitation, the Nasik temple entry agitation, the Baroda event, his constitution drafting, and his conversion to Buddhism. All the events are woven together in an unusual arrangement of time and space. Malvika's Ambedkarite consciousness helped her critique the draconian caste-Hindu system and she paints Ambedkar's experiences of humiliations to underscore how inhumane the caste system is. Ambedkar's caste life narrative inspired Malvika to use her narrative skills to paint what her consciousness recognized was important, enabling her to dissect the traditional behavior of India's caste-Hindu population.

Photography is another medium through which the stark realities of life can be captured through sustained engagements with the subject of caste. Technical aspects of light and darkness, along with illuminating effects, encompass

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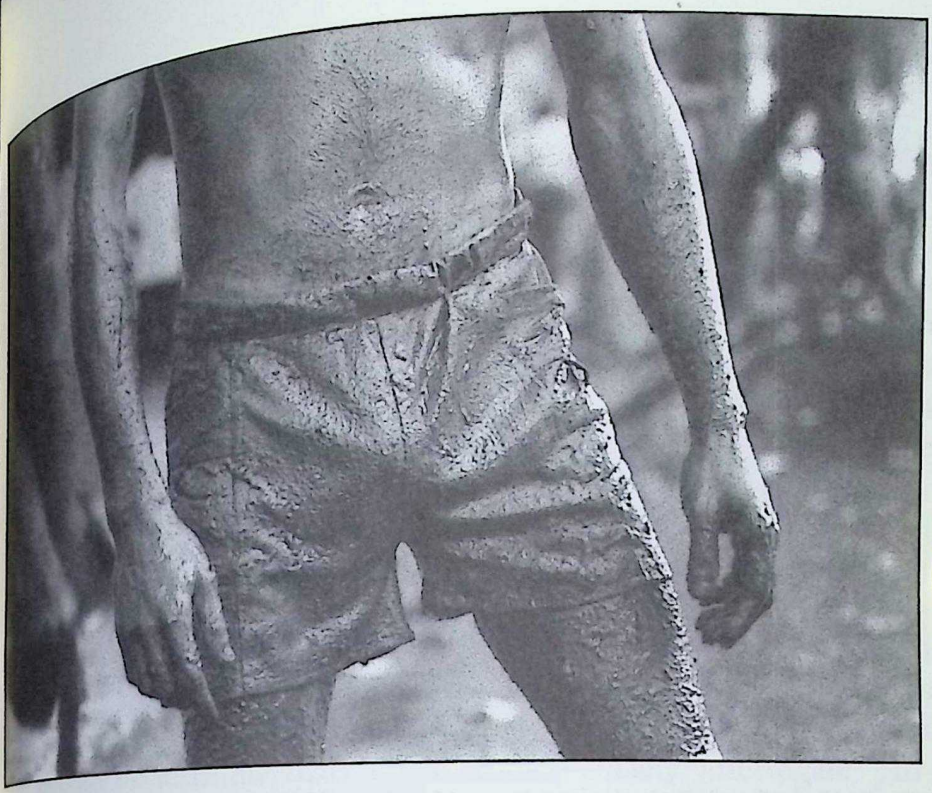

Figure 16. Sudharak Owle, *Conservancy Workers*, 12 inches x 18 inches, 1999–2000. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

the formal language of photography. It is important to note the exoticism that gets attached to photographic images. Orientalist attitudes have been a part of photographic engagements in India. Sudharak Olwe, who constantly engaged with a caste subject as part of his social and professional commitment, produced a series of photographs of conservancy workers from the Mumbai Municipal Corporation. His images captured, in stark and contrasting natural light, the dirt, filth, and naked reality of these Dalit workers. He underlined the life of the manual scavenger in the chief metropolis of democratic India. Though political democracy and equality are invoked to celebrate the emergence of the modern nation, the conditions of the "lower castes," as captured through the medium of photography, narrate a different tale. Representation's symbolic nature is subsumed in the realistic capturing in photography, and the subject of caste is used to unfold the nature of the hierarchical structure of society. Similarly, Olwe has made numerous photographic images of Kamathipura, the red light area in Mumbai. Dirt, discomfort, and dinginess are part of Kamathipura, where prostituted people are made to sell their bodies to make a living. Olwe has captured vivid details regarding relationships among people in the red light district, including the relationship of a prostituted woman with her husband as well as with her intimate friend and how both

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Figure 17. Sudharak Owle, *Kamathipura*, 16 inches x 20 inches, 2003. © Copyright and reproduced courtesy of the artist.

are part of her life, even when she dies. These are emotionally charged images. They diminish perceptions of sexual desire; instead, the omnipresence of perversity enters through such pictorial representations (Figs. 16 and 17). When caste becomes an intervening tool in pictorial language, the stark realities of life demand a radical departure from conventional, aesthetic beauty.

Tradition's homogenizing force is a project of nationalist aspirations. This force limits the kind of artwork that is commissioned and exhibited, reducing artistic articulations of what is contained within nationalist imaginations. Works of art become timid and devoid of anyone not celebrated in the national imaginary, particularly the "lower castes." The supposed postcolonial realm hardly produces a capacity to address difference. It does not offer a constructive critique of the hegemonic thinking that most Indians practice and bypasses issues of representation, making the process of knowledge formation a part of "protected ignorance."

Several works have been produced as part of the conceptual framework of the "postcolonial." "Subaltern" has become a generic category within postcolonial frameworks. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak argues that articulation is monopolized, and subalterns do not have that kind of power. Caste life narratives are one way in which self-representation is made possible.

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Experiential realities are represented through an expressive language. Self-representation through narratives about caste is actual representation of the self, reported in the physical realm of caste life. The self is reconstructed, challenging the perceptions of caste-Hindu society. These experiences, though they are in constant flux, are evidence of the troubling reality of caste-Hindu behavior.

The more pertinent questions here are who are the subalterns and how do we understand and categorize both the subaltern as such and subaltern experiences? In the Indian context, the term has gained considerable currency in the fields of literature, drama, and visual arts. The subaltern is understood as being located in opposition to hegemony. However, "whose hegemony?" is a critical question of analysis. Other serious questions draw our attention to the conceptual category of the subaltern. Subaltern consciousness often does not question graded hierarchy. By applying Ambedkar's definition of caste we can see that the very rubric of subalternity bypasses the existential realm of a direct experience of division of laborers. Caste life narratives, driven by an Ambedkarite consciousness, signify a power of articulation, where the physical realm of existence is categorical in realizing aspirations of equality and liberty. This essay has shown that caste life narratives, as expressed through certain works of art, challenge the social metanarrative of Indian society, interrogate "protected ignorance," implicitly question the ambiguous category of "subaltern," interrogate the "postcolonial," and critique Brahmanical hegemony.

NOTES

1. For more information, see Alone, "Dr. Ambedkar."
2. The English term close to the word *varna* is "class." *Varna* division in the Brahmanical/Hindu social order consists of four hierarchical divisions of class, mainly the Brahmin (priestly class/community), Kshatriya (warriors), Vaishya (trading class/community), and Shudra (servile class/community).
3. See also Kumar, *Caste and Democracy*; Kumar, "Babashaeb."
4. Gupta was a political dynasty that ruled in North India from 320 to 550 BCE. During this period, many Sanskrit texts were rewritten, new Sanskrit texts were composed, Sanskrit became the language of the court and inscriptions, donations were made to Brahmins, and cow killing resulted in capital punishment. Brahmanical discourse considers the Gupta period as the "golden age" of Indian history.
5. See Kapur and Sundaram; Achar and Pannikar.
6. The entire Ambedkarite community in the state of Maharashtra, as well as outside, never accepted Gandhi, sensing that the life of "untouchables" would have been different had they gotten the separate electorate that Gandhi opposed leading up to independence in what is called the Poona Pact. Eventually, political and employment reservation emerged as a solution, which found a place in the Constitution of India. Their displeasure emerged out of their own caste narratives because the other leaders who mattered to them the most were unrepresented in art.

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7. Manu was one of the ancient law givers in India and composed the text Manusmriti in Sanskrit, which dates to the second century BCE. Among other things, the text supports various social codes and punishments based on the four-fold division of *varnas*, including suppressive codes for women and draconian practices.
8. Trivikrama is an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu who, according to mythology, goes to King Bali as a tiny Brahmin and expands himself to capture the universe. He places one leg on the head of Bali and buries him. The image of Trivikrama is always shown with a raised leg in space.

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MANGALA BANSODE AND THE SOCIAL LIFE OF TAMASHA
CASTE, SEXUALITY, AND DISCRIMINATION IN MODERN MAHARASHTRA

SHAILAJA PAIK

The Tamasha (traveling folk theater) legend Vithabai Narayangavkar sang a famous Lavani (folk song) in the 1960s:

> *laaj dhara pavana janachi manachi*
> *potasathi nachatey mee parva kunachi*
> *dava dola jhakun khunavu naka, ho asa tumhi hinavu naka*
> *aathavan dete mee tarnya panachi*
> *potasathi nachatey mee parva kunachi*
>
> [O guest, maintain your shame for others as well as for yourself. I am dancing to earn my livelihood; I do not care for anybody else. Do not make sexual gestures by winking your left eye at me. You are actually mocking me. I am helping you remember your youth. I am dancing for my everyday living. I do not care for anybody else.][1]

Through such pointed and piercing songs, Vithabai interpreted her life as a ritual of "rough music" and cruelty, sharply ridiculing her mixed upper- and lower-caste male audience.[2] Deploying her song as a double entendre to illuminate the tension between her bodily performance of seduction and lyrical refusal of any sexual union, Vithabai productively used her practice of popular song and dance ritual to express her social and economic anxieties as well as to record her resistance and resilience against private and public patriarchy. In so doing, Vithabai exercised her agency, however limited: many times, she used the politics of Tamasha and Lavani to challenge her supposed powerlessness.

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In this essay, I deploy the oral history of Mangalatai[3] Bansode (the daughter of Vithabai), a rare and powerful Dalit professional Tamasgir (Tamasha performer) woman and also troupe leader, to examine the ways she repeatedly performed the "obscene" and the "erotic," to earn her livelihood while she also contested and purposefully negotiated patriarchy, public politics, and, most importantly, larger shifting structures of "tradition" and "modernity." How did Mangalatai—a daughter, sister, wife, mother, and grandmother—negotiate double living in her shifting personal and professional life? How did she navigate the image of being a "seductress" in the so-called "dangerous" and "vulgar" practice of Tamasha and Lavani? How did she manage to concentrate on and excel in her art above her rivals? To investigate these questions, I focus on hitherto unexamined "interlocking technologies" of caste, class, community, gender, and sexuality from the position and perspectives of Maharashtrian (Western India) Dalit performers.[4]

Although Mangalatai gradually asserted her power, paradoxically she was also powerless. Her complex life represents her ideas, intentions, and actions, continually entangled in the intersecting webs of her triumphs and tribulations, transformations and tensions, suppression and subversion. I thus attend to deep tensions in her *double living*: the private and public and the personal and professional as well as her triply discriminated life due to the intersectionality of her caste, gender, and sexuality. There were no clean boundaries: the multiple oppressions constantly crept into, challenged, and complicated each other, puncturing her seemingly triumphalist life narrative.

My essay is the first attempt to analyze Mangalatai's life. I examine Mangalatai's everyday living to uncover the hitherto unexplored potentials and problems of intimate and interlocking relations between a Dalit woman artist's "deviant" sexuality, labor, and struggle for survival; the community's social, cultural, and political battles; and folk culture. In so doing, I provide micro-level details of the historical experiences of poverty, hunger, education or the lack thereof, occupation, the strategic deployment of *body politics*, and sexual economy of *erotic excess*. There is no written record of Mangalatai's experiences. Though a celebrity who regularly performed for audiences in Maharashtra and whose website provides photographs of her, her life has remained marginal and obscure.[5]

Methodologically, I aim to open up Mangalatai's lived experiences as epistemic spaces and use the newly produced knowledge to analyze the materiality of caste, class, gender, sexual oppression, local economy, and power relationships, both within and outside of the Dalit community. I delve deeply into personal experiences of Mangalatai's exceptional life to document how she was contained by and at the same time transgressed patriarchy and examine

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the interlocking technologies of social, familial, political, economic, sexual, and emotional histories of Dalit women. I thus unravel gendered and moral conflicts inside the Dalit community. In contemporary times, Tamasha has emerged as a contested performative practice for the government, social scientists, activists, and Tamasha artists themselves. Mangalatai's individual life narrative offers a unique and unexplored perspective to examine the larger societal, political, cultural, and statist transformations of which she is a part. Mangalatai's life narrative is a social biography that interconnects her past, present, and future with her family, community, and local economy.

TAMASHA: THE TRAVELING FOLK THEATER OF MAHARASHTRA

Colloquially, the word Tamasha has come to mean fun, play, or even disorder and commotion. Historically, Tamasha actors have preserved and transformed Tamasha and Lavani through the tumultuous changes of time, largely for low- and middle-class caste consumption in contemporary Maharashtra. Maharashtra is home to a rich theatrical history spanning many centuries. As in other parts of Asia, secular theater in Maharashtra brings together skit, song, dance, mime, poetry, and farce. Etymologically, the word Tamasha has roots in Arabic and literally means a show, spectacle, or even a sort of theatrical entertainment. Tamasha as a form of entertainment is thus evidence of the interconnections between Marathi, Persian, and Arab cultures, languages, and societies since the medieval period. It only became associated with being a low-caste folk form at the end of the seventeenth and start of the eighteenth century (Achalkhamb 9).

However, the writer Sadanand Rane favors a different Sanskritic genealogy for Tamasha and suggests that the etymology of the word is *tama* and *asha*, a form that takes us from *tama* (darkness) to *asha* (light) (183).[6] In this alternative etymology, Rane implicitly rejects the idea of an Arabic root. Yet, because the word is rooted in *tama* (ignorance) and ribaldry of supposedly "rural" Bahujans (low-caste people), the ruling elites have expressed their prejudice against the genre's performers. They continually look(ed) down upon Tamasha and sought to sanitize it. Tamasha includes the Maharashtrian local forms of entertainment such as Dashavatar, Gondhal, Lalita, Lavani, and so on (Joshi 121). Lavani is the folkloric singing with *adakari* (gestures) in the Tamasha art form. There are at least five types of Lavanya,[7] including the puranic, devotional, and *shringarik* (erotic). Not all Lavanya are bawdy songs, as most writers have suggested; yet, a titillating *shringar* of lovers has become essential to this form of entertainment, especially for the predominantly male audience. Unlike saints, who were relegated to spiritual affairs, *shahirs* engaged with the sensual (Joshi 130).

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Tamasha artists, like their Bengali *jatra* and Gujarati *bhavai* counterparts, performed in public squares and open spaces and drew a mixed audience comprised of middle- and low-caste women and men. Traditionally, traders, landlords, local kings, and, most significantly, ordinary people provided patronage to maintain performers and to put on their shows.

Historically, Tamasha constructed close communities of mixed castes as well as religions. It is one of the important *lokakalas*, cultures of the (Bahujan) people of Maharashtra. Traditionally, traveling Tamasha artists largely belonged to nomadic (Kolhati, Asvalvale, Bahurupi, Vasudev), low-caste, and Dalit *bara balutedars* (various artisanal castes) who performed different services for the village, such as Dhobi (washerman), Kumbhar (potter), Mahar, Mang,[8] Sutar (carpenter), Teli (oil presser), and so on, and belonged to both Hindu and Muslim religious communities (Joshi 95). Some Brahman men like Ram Joshi and Patthe Bapurav also performed in Tamasha.

Nonetheless, the wider society and lower and upper castes therein already naturalized the constitution of caste communities within a feudal context. For example, there is a saying in Marathi that crystallizes practices of certain castes: *Brahmana ghari lihina, kunbya ghari dana, ann Mahara ghari gaana* (the top-most caste, Brahmins, are to read and write, peasants to produce grains, and Dalit Mahars to sing and dance). Reinforcing the cultural practices of certain caste communities, the historian Hiroyuki Kotani notes that the ruling classes expected even the headman of Mahars from the Sasvad District (near Pune) to play music during festivals (123).[9] Mahars performed singing, drumming, and music not only to carry out (one of their fifty-two) duties to spread the message of the state to the larger masses but used their skilled performance as a significant medium of entertainment, and moreover deployed this performance as a form of political protest during the twentieth century. Entire villages came out to enjoy these popular Tamasha performances that served as a crucial conduit for the transmission of new ideas.

From the early decades of the twentieth century, Dalit radicals deployed the public culture of Tamasha, Lavani, and street theater in the construction of the vibrant public sphere, and at the same time underscored a new morality and modernity. Dalit radicals like Kisan Phaguji Bansode, Baba Valangkar, Shivram Janba Kamble, and B. R. Ambedkar amply recognized the culture and power of the word and speaking aloud for communicating with an audience that was mostly illiterate. As Bhagavan Thakur elucidates in *Ambedkari Jalse*, by adopting the popular medium of Jalsa (folk drama) in the 1930s, troupes toured remote villages and modern cities and engaged in singing and music to bring about social change.

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In this historical conjuncture, the "fun and play" Tamasha emerged as bawdy and risqué. Earlier there was no ban on women watching Tamasha, yet now their participation both as actors and audience members did not fit the new Dalit morality under modernity. Although modernizing, socially mobile Dalit radicals celebrated the Ambedkarite Jalsa. At the same time, they sought to raise their moral status in the eyes of the upper castes and the colonial government. Toward this end, Dalits first colluded with upper castes and the colonial rulers to underscore a "modern" Victorian and Brahmani (brahmanical) morality. As a result, they depict(ed) Tamasha entertainers and entertainment as "immoral," "vulgar," and relegated Tamasha to the realm of "folk art." Most significantly, they now looked upon women actors in Tamasha as a symbol of Dalit degradation. They also banned certain "corrupt" practices in the Tamasha form. In so doing, Dalits refashioned Tamasha by restricting the supposedly "immoral" lives of Muralis (women wedded to the god Khandoba) and Tamasgir women performers because they supposedly represented Dalits' "backwardness." As I point out in my work elsewhere, to elite Dalit women and men, Muralis and Tamasgir women became objects of exploitation, eroticization, and sexual possession for men of all castes, and hence these "lowly," "dishonorable" women had to be "cleansed."[10]

Some Dalit and non-Dalit artists and radical women and men underscored the sensual and sexual overtones of Tamasha and Lavani; yet in both the colonial and postcolonial periods, non-Dalit men artists as well as the state government have sought to sanitize Tamasha performance. The hypocritical state of Maharashtra seems both to provide patronage and at the same time neglect and abandon Tamasha. Most significantly, by making Tamasha a practice of producing Marathamola, robust masculine Marathi identity, the elite upper and lower castes and the state have reappropriated the social and sexual labor of Tamasha artists to serve the state of Maharashtra. As a result, agents of the state have further stigmatized Tamasgirs and also sustained their labor by consistently giving awards to them.

Tamasgir women and men thus engaged the interlocking social, sensual, and sexual realms. Textual and ethnographic evidence illustrates that artists debated deeper social, political, spiritual, ethical, and *shringarik* questions as they emerged in everyday human living. Tamasha songs, skits, and loud music presented dilemmas that people could relate to. On the one hand, some songs and dramas evoked high moral duty, loyalty, devotion, spirituality, and heroic deeds, and on the other hand, tensions and conflicts in the private and public sphere, true and passionate love, and pleasure.

Significantly, both Tamasha *kalakar* (artists) and audiences engaged in the Marathi *kala* (art) to deploy a reiterative body politics of erotic excess: emphasizing bold bodily gestures, that is, winking the left eye to entice one another

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accentuating and deploying certain body parts like breasts and hips, openly expressing sensuality and sexual mores, lovemaking, and sexual enjoyment for their predominantly male audience. At the same time, they also sought to solidify a certain normative construction of Marathi masculinity and femininity; that is, a Marathamola man and woman. While they described the man as a brave fighter, tall, with broad shoulders and a thick moustache, the woman was depicted as fair, delicate, doe-eyed, draped in tight *choli* (traditional blouse) and nine-yard sari that accentuated her figure.

MANGALATAI, TAMASHA, AND LAVANI: FROM MARGINS TO CENTER

In this essay, I break significant historical, societal, intellectual, ideological, and scholarly silences, and bring the so-called "vulgar" Tamasha women to the center of the discipline of History. Historians and anthropologists have seldom considered the life histories of Tamasha artists worthy of systematic analysis. Over the past four decades there has been an increasing academic interest in the field of popular culture and cultural studies. However, in the Indian context, and more specifically in Maharashtra, an elitist focus in the English language on bourgeois forms of "high" art, literature, and entertainment has historically marginalized and even excluded "low" cultures of Tamasha and Lavani, including the performers of these cultural forms. Moreover, elite scholars often writing in an allegedly universal English language have often privileged English as "orderly" and "scholarly." In the process, they have continually marginalized vernacular Marathi materials, Dalit epistemologies, and histories. Further, there is little study about the intersections of popular practices of caste-based cultural forms with sexual labor.

In the broader Indian context, scholars have studied the actions of non-elite groups and popular culture in North and East India.[11] Some have also focused on the lives of Dalit *nautanki* performers and *tawaifs* in North India, and *jogatis* and highly trained, higher-status Devadasis in South India.[12] Unlike Dalit *jogatis*, devadasis performed in the urban temple complexes. In the context of Maharashtra, scholars have also focused on *rashtriya kirtankars* (a nationalist performance combining singing, storytelling, and Hindu philosophical discourse), low-caste and Dalit bhakti saints,[13] music and theatrics of Tamasha and Lavani,[14] and non-Dalit devadasis.[15] Some scholars have worked on elite Marathi theater and other upper-caste initiatives, but they have occluded Tamasha and Lavani art forms.

By contrast, scholars of Marathi literature have mined the literary content and form of Tamasha and Lavani, low-caste art, aesthetics, and culture in the vernacular Marathi language.[16] Some writers have even focused on select leading men *lavanikaars* (Lavani performers), such as Honaji Bala,

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Figure 1. Mangalatai leading the Lavani performers in September 2004 at Bal Gandharva, Pune. Photo by author.

Saganbhau, Patthe Bapurao, and Ram Joshi, and recorded their lives and Lavanya.[17] More recently, a few artists and activists have sought to understand the complex lives of artists like Vithabai and published their autobiographies and biographies.[18]

However, there are limitations in existing scholarship. Many writers have confined themselves to the textual realm, detailed literary modes and instruments used in the folk art, and thus objectified Tamasha artists. As a result, writers and scholars have rarely stepped outside their middle-class apartments to interact or travel with Tamasha artists to examine their ideas, experiences, and lives. Very rarely have students of Tamasha theater actually engaged with the social life of Tamasha artists, although some journalists, like Sandesh Bhandare and Shirish Shetye, have traveled to open and enclosed Tamasha theaters to produce photographic books on the everyday life of Tamasha artists. Another significant problem is that most writers do not provide detailed information on or analysis of the Marathi sources they procured.

My study departs from the earlier works by turning the gaze onto the hitherto unexamined social life of Tamasha. Moreover, I deploy the oral history of Dalit performers and Dalit epistemologies. Historians have scarcely considered how the actions of the subordinated interrupted polite culture in

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historical times. Most significantly, there is, thus, little study of the historical and cultural politics of the upper- and lower-caste women and men actors who actualized different literary and theatrical forms as well as continually struggled and negotiated with each other. To date, with the rare exception of two articles by Sharmila Rege and Veena Naregal, there is no systematic study of the role of caste-based cultural performance in the broader social and political history of modern Maharashtra in the English language. Rege significantly delineates the historical shifts in Tamasha and Lavani performances to argue that "shringarik lavani became one of the modes of constructing the bodies of lower caste women as constantly arousing, or satiating male desire" (249). More recently, Naregal's essay has sought to examine elite ideological and organizational maneuvers to marginalize Lavani and Tamasha and "establish normative categories, institutional networks, and theatrical practices" (51). I build on these works by deepening studies on Tamasha through a focus on the personal life narrative of an individual woman, centering Dalit epistemologies to record the social history of Tamasha.

HERSTORY: LIFE NARRATIVE, SOCIAL HISTORY, AND EVERYDAY LIVING

Life narratives help us to interrupt and interrogate official history by asking different and difficult questions of the historical, "official," written record. Methodologically, I deploy the life narrative of an individual woman to break boundaries and create conversations between different archives and methods: oral history, folklore, ethnography, and life narrative. In so doing, I not only disrupt the dominant focus on elite actors but also provide strategic spaces for so-called "corrupt" and despised women to verbalize their own ideas, emotions, and lives.

We have to engage seriously in oral history to study Dalit women's own understanding of their history, to write richer and multilayered accounts, including official and non-official history.[19] Dalit histories are not captured in archives, and we need to develop this critical past through the "eyes of the present" (Carr 4). Such a methodology is crucial to hearing voices from within the language of caste, gender, and sexuality. To pursue this methodology, I contracted women performers to collect their life narratives, always paying attention to the uniqueness of each case, not looking merely for abstractions (Atkinson; Portelli, *The Death* 35).

The collection of such life narratives provides a way to put on record the experiences of relatively powerless Dalit women whose ways of knowing and ways of seeing the world are rarely acknowledged, let alone celebrated, in the expressions of a Brahmani hegemonic culture. I underscore Sumitra Bhave's argument: to capture the "life blood and heartbeat of Dalit women

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oral histories are needed to supplement conceptual knowledge" (xii). Along with conceptual and theoretical analyses, it is essential to examine the real-life experiences of Dalit women to generate theory.

Telling and listening to such stories also created vital links among us—Dalit women—and it could be a powerful and practical instrument of conscientization.[20] In this case, I am an insider/outsider. Dalit women's personal narratives offer them a place from which to reflect upon *our* past and present experiences; to scrutinize *our* stories, which carry agency, meaning, and information about the social and psychological positions we inhabit. The popularity of autobiography and narrativity in feminist research is a measure of the significance attached to experience, reflection, and psychoanalytic understanding as a counterbalance to the kind of public and external evidence that is available from historical and structural analysis and political economy. Many Tamasha women felt very proud to be interviewed and recorded for the first time in their lives. At the same time, some women consciously chose not to speak with me. Through Mangalatai's social biography and oral history, I write a fuller account of Dalit women's ideas, actions, and lives. I represent Mangalatai's experiences, challenges, and corporeal and emotional pressures to put on record her ways of knowing and seeing the world.

ENGAGING HISTORICAL FIELDWORK: BREATHING IN DUST FROM THE FIELD

I first met Mangalatai, a non-literate Tamasha dancer on September 3, 2004 during her performance at the famous Bal Gandharva Rangmandir auditorium in Pune. On October 9 of the same year, I saw her perform in Kada village in Ahmednagar district. In the many hours we spent together, Mangalatai remembered her past and narrated her present while also speculating about her actions in the future. Epistemologically and politically, our listening presence helped Mangalatai evoke forgotten moments, name her anger and discontent with her life situation, and record her resilience and frustrations both to herself and me (Gay 166).[21] We chatted away that hot afternoon as artists continued with their card games, relaxed or slept before the evening performance, checked their equipment, and ate their meals in the shade of the tents. This was their everyday way of life for eight to nine months every year.

In Mangalatai's words, *our* common background facilitated my entering into sequestered spaces that were often out of bounds to elite scholars:

> I do not take riks [risks], I am a little concerned about who is interviewing, what will they do with my information, and where it will end up? However, I am very happy to talk with you because you belong to *aapla samaj* [our community]. It is because of that that I am sitting with you, or else, we live or die, who cares for us? (Bansode)

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Mangalatai did not want to invite trouble from non-caste members. The deeper Marathi caste-community cord is very significant to Mangalatai. She was more comfortable talking with me as a person who belonged to "our" community. Moreover, by deploying her own low-class and low-caste vocabulary of "riks," Mangalatai challenges elite, cultured, sanitized, and sanskritized language practices. Albeit after some persuasion, she talked unhindered and built our common connection.

Mangalatai was a generous host, offering me the best *methichi bhaaji* (vegetable made from fenugreek leaves) and *bhakri* (bread) cooked on a *chool* (open hearth), and I am grateful to her for spending time with me and sharing her life experiences. Other women and men in the troupe viewed me with skepticism. "What is she, a middle-class looking lady, doing here?" they may have thought. I noticed that during our conversation, Mangalatai was very alert and kept a close watch on eavesdroppers who could overhear her story. To be more cautious, we constantly shifted from one location to the other: inside the tent that was a temporary home for artists, outside to the fields, and at times the area around the tent over which we walked. In this manner, she could also keep a watch on workers attending to their duties as she continued to share her experiences of poverty, politics, and titillating performance.

POLICING WOMEN, PRODUCING TAMASHA

Tamasgir women were at the mercy of men in the audience and contractors/managers who policed them in the interest of producing Tamasha. Though of a low status, Mangalatai and other Tamasha artists are hereditary/non-hereditary folk-theater performers; they are not common "prostitutes" or "sex workers." However, they deploy their body politics, their itinerant performativity of their sensual and sexual selves and informal sexual relationships as an economic resource. As a result, women's bodies and especially women's sexuality are a form of wealth for the family. Many women negotiate patriarchal power and bend it to suit their own purposes, engaging the sexual economy of erotic excess and normative societal structures of caste, gender, sexual, and familial labor by manipulating their bodies. Women were (and are) sometimes able to appropriate their own sexuality, selling it, abandoning marriage, and keeping the benefits that they accrue for themselves. In these processes, gender and sexuality emerge(d) as generative activities in a particular way: as source and effect of exchange.[22] However, Mangalatai's modes of life "exceed the logic of capital itself" (Spivak 251) because families increase the value of women by keeping them inside the family and community, and not selling them off as objects of barter and exchange or gifts in the marriage economy.[23]

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POVERTY AND HUNGER

We need to challenge critiques located in an East/West or resistance/domination binary that often buries the complexity of women's experiences. Most Tamasgirs concur that they were pushed to perform because of poverty. Yet feminists have asserted that "coercion by poverty" has essentialist connotations and have challenged Orientalist representations of Western women as full of agency and Asian women as powerless victims or "vulnerable to exploitation, in contrast with the promiscuous Western woman who is ruled by the (im)morality of the market" (Kapur 124).[24] Mangalatai recounts her actual days of poverty and hunger: "When I was with my mother, *khaaychi tarambal hoti*," she says, describing how hard it was to procure food. "We had name and fame, but no money to even buy food. My father, uncles both maternal and paternal, looted my mother." Women are often the breadwinners of the entire family, and it is poverty as well as their generational ties to Tamasha that enable them to draw upon their bodies as an economic resource by performing in Tamasha. Mangalatai underscores that although her mother was very famous, as a child Mangalatai did not get food. Moreover, men who depended on women's familial, social, and sexual labor, and at times supported them, also often further oppressed those women.

Seconding Mangalatai, the highly reputed Lavani *samaradni* (Lavani empress) Surekhatai Punekar, a Dalit artist hailing from Pune, recounts her overlapping and complicated struggles:

> My maternal grandparents were in Tamasha. My father was a *hamal* [coolie] at Pune Railway Station. He continued with his *hamali* during the daytime and engaged in *bailgadicha* [bullock cart] Tamasha in the nights. Once the bullock cart met with an accident, and I got a deep cut on my leg. During those times there was only *jhada khalcha* [under the tree] Tamasha. There was no proper stage. Tamasgirs also did not earn the kind of income they do these days. I was introduced to the stage when I was only eight years old. I liked to dance and sing. My father also instructed me to sing well. He did not allow me to sleep and *phatke dyayache avaj chadhavanya sathi* [punished me so I would sing higher]. I stood on a chair and sang. (Punekar)

Thus, Surekhatai endured being physically beaten by her father because she knew without her income there would be no food at home. Hunger was common, she reports:

> We went from village to village to perform. When we got to the village we first begged for *bhakri* and *kalvan* [bread and curry], and then after collecting everything ate together at a *chavadi* [village common hall] and performed in the nights. After three, four months we went home until Divali and worked at *dhoonya bhandyachi*

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karma [washing clothes and utensils] for 10–12 families. We never had food to eat in our home. I remember *majhe garibiche divas* [days of my poverty], sometimes we got only black tea [because there was no money to buy milk] and *batar* [hard bread]. (Punekar)

Surekhatai was constantly afflicted by hunger and poverty during her childhood. Over the years, however, the larger poverty narrative proved to be complicated and sat uneasily with some non-hereditary young artists who pursued different aims. Mangalatai mentions: "These days girls, college students from even higher castes [Brahmin] at times due to poverty but also to earn easy pocket money participate in my troupe. They want to work with me" (Bansode). For hereditary artists, poverty is further compounded by ignorance and illiteracy.

SCHOOLING AND PEDAGOGY OF THE TAMASHA STAGE

Tamasha artists' first lessons of education are the dance and song training they receive from their parents or family. In the process, the Tamasha stage itself transforms into a school on which parents, like schoolteachers, inflict *phatke* (beatings) to discipline children and instill the pedagogy and body politics of song and dance ritual. Surekhatai was not sent to school because her migratory lifestyle could not allow for this luxury. She reasons:

> My parents were alcoholic. Because my father was *kalechya nadat* [engrossed in the art] he did not send me to school. We were six siblings. I must say that while my parents sent my sisters to school to be educated until the third grade, I was never given such an opportunity. I don't know the reason—my mother said she didn't know. (Punekar)

In a similar vein, Mangalatai continues that her mother initiated her into Tamasha:

> When my mother performed in her Tamasha, there were fewer women performers. She needed more women in her troupe and hence, she discontinued my schooling when I was in class two and pushed me on to the Tamasha stage when I was merely nine years old. Today, I am fifty-five and I am still dancing. My mother is my guru. I am famous because of her. My mother also danced from when she was seven years old. Initially I was scared of the people, but gradually I became bold and could tackle them as I turned fifteen or sixteen. My son Nitin was also introduced to the Tamasha stage when he was only seven years old. We tried our best, but he did not study at all. (Bansode)

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Education for Mangalatai was the actual pedagogical training and practice of Tamasha on and off stage. At times, artists hire dance and music experts to train them, but not all women prefer to dance, as Mangalatai's sister Kranti reports:

> I do not like to dance, I always wanted to sing, but my mother only brought me out to dance. I have studied until the fifth class, but I was not interested in school. My mother used to dance and move around, and we were left with some caretaker *bai* who fed us, clothed us, and sent us to school. It was like we were just dancing as a hobby, or since it was in the family, our condition was quite good I feel. After my mother's death, I am now with my elder sister. (Narayangavkar)

Many women were busy earning for their families, and consequently, they could not pay attention to their children. They could barely spend time with them or think about their rearing.

Like classical artists, Tamasha artists spent long hours learning dance moves and in rehearsals. Some also took classical, *kathak* lessons. Mangalatai also learned to dance, sing, perform a variety of skits, and engage in a confident and bold manner with the mixed-caste male audience. The pedagogical goals of Tamasgirs for everyday survival thus contrasted with those of middle-class Dalits who sought education for self-esteem, self-reliance, dignity, self-assertion, and community power (Paik, *Dalit*). Tamasgir parents, kin, and associates educated and trained women to be alert, smart, and attractive, and to engage the audience and cater to men's sensual demands.

BODY POLITICS AND EROTIC EXCESS

The everyday sustenance of Tamasgirs depends on their negotiation, bending, and transgressing of traditional patriarchy through an excessive performance of the erotic and exotic. Although agents of the colonial and postcolonial Maharashtra state, along with upper- and lower-caste women and men, seek to sanitize Maharashtrian society, Mangalatai underscores the necessity of *ashlil* (obscene), erotic excess:

> Some old, traditional Lavanya have *ashlil shabda* [obscene, vulgar words]. We have to dance and make gestures in tune with these words because people in the audience like it. So, we have to also perform *ashlil adaa* [obscene gestures]. For example, the words *choli majhi taatali, kaya majhi bhijali* [my blouse is tight because of full breasts and my body is wet]. How do you show this? How do you show that you have full breasts and hence the choli is tight and the body is covered with water [thus clearly revealing the private body parts]? There's another Lavani: *kiti mee halavu, kiti mee halavu . . . thand garavaa?* [how much do I shake, how much do I shake in this cool breeze?] One has to show everything, enact, and bring to life these obscene words. (Bansode)

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Mangalatai indicates that to earn their living, Tamasgir women deploy obscene words and a body politics of erotic excess to entice and fulfill men's desires. It was thus a titillating vicious circle: men in the audience want more sexual and sexual titillation, and women performers provide it because they think that is exactly what audiences want. As a result, women on stage and men in the audience participate in a mutuality of desire through a sexual and erotic body politics of gestures, including winking the left eye, biting lips, continually shaking hips and breasts, accentuating particular body parts, and so on.

Although Mangalatai felt the pains and predicaments of a dancer, at the same time she underscores that artists were dependent on the audience: "Public demands *ashlil* Lavanya. We have to satisfy them, and everybody does it. So, we cannot really help it, or we will lose." As much as in scholarly economics, everybody in the Tamasha occupation and business understands the operations of the law of *magani tasa puravatha* (demand and supply). Women, the main breadwinners, easily incorporate family members into the practice of Tamasha. Women and men fight with and support each other. They defend patriarchal rules, partner with each other, and together share the different tasks of singing, dancing, helping with chores, and taking care of the younger children. Yet men also exploit Dalit women's social and sexual labor in various ways.

"DEVIANT" SEXUALITY AND THE BRAHMANI PATRIARCHAL POLITICS OF MANGALSUTRA

The Brahmani patriarchal ruling classes of colonial and postcolonial Maharashtra create(d) a normative hierarchy of caste, gender, and sexuality. As a result, they tightly tie(d) mobile Tamasha dancers to the lowest ladder of sex and sexuality and even depict(ed) their sexuality as "deviant" because, to them, unlike elite women, low-status Tamasha women were not sexually monogamous. Tamasha women engaged in flexible relationships, though some were legally married. Especially during colonial times, driven by social, sexual, and (national) cultural anxiety, ruling elites' engaged with the "woman question" that was rooted in caste structure. To construct a "moral," "respectable" Indian woman they created the binary of "good wife" and "bad prostitute," thus strengthening the connection between chastity and higher caste and excluding low-caste Tamasha performers. As I state elsewhere, upper-caste women and men resignified the "loose" morality of Dalit women to amplify their own upper-caste morality and caste power. Tamasha women are thus in constant and potential danger of being violated physically and face many other *vyap* (difficulties), as Surekhatai and Mangalatai recount.

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Tamasha is a highly stigmatized occupation due to the potential for sexual abuse by men. The danger continued for Mangalatai, as she notes:

> In the beginning I was scared to face the public. However, *gradually I learned to handle the public. Hey lok cheshta kartyat, maskari kartyat, pan kunibi haat nhai lavala ajoon . . . mee kadak bai haye* [These people make fun of me, ridicule me, but nobody has so far touched me physically . . . because I am a very strict woman]. *Mee ek lakh deto, don lakh deto, jhopaya ye . . . ashe mhas prasang hote* [I will give one or two lakhs, sleep with me . . . there were many such incidents], but I never gave in and just continued with my Tamasha. My family has been attacked; I have faced caste discrimination in my village . . . but this is life! (Bansode, emphasis mine)

This is the traveling life of a Tamasha dancer: insecure and unstable, oppressed by the intersecting matrix of caste, gender, and sexuality; however, the caravan is always on the move. Due to her engagement with the public and lowly Tamasha, Mangalatai is always already discriminated against as a "promiscuous" Dalit woman by men of all castes. Nevertheless, over the years, she strengthened herself, learned to work with men, and found ways to protect herself.

Mangalatai recounts some significant hazards in the life of Tamasha:

> I remember I was made to dance in what is called a *jhadakhalcha* Tamasha, that is, Tamasha under a tree. There was no stage and we were dancing with all the people around us. I had to walk to the men to take the money from them and at that instance they used to pull the sari or pull us. We were helpless. Sometimes we tried to smile and get away and at times some men from the troupe intervened. What to do . . . *publicach mai baap* [the public is our mother and father, a protector and provider]. I will continue to dance for at least ten years, as long as the public wants me. (Bansode)

Thus, Mangalatai reiterates that men looked at her as a public woman who could be trifled with. She gradually learned to negotiate with men, and to bend and transgress public patriarchy purposefully. Over the years, she also improved her economic status. Mangalatai argues that the government should provide some concession in diesel rates to Tamasha artists who were always on the move. She owned eight trucks. One had a generator and needed a regular supply of diesel. It produced enough electricity for two villages.

Yet life was unstable. Surekhatai recounts her misfortune in finding a trustworthy life partner:

> During my Tamasha life, I fell in love with [a Muslim man] Baba Pathan Contractor. Of course, he never took me to his house because I was a Tamasha dancer [a loathed object nobody wants to associate with]. He used to lock me in a room at a

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lodge and visit his family, whenever he wanted to. After a few years, I was pregnant and Pathan abandoned me. My family was furious with me over this relationship. And, I still continued to dance. (Punekar)

Surekhatai's silence and discomfort while reflecting on her relationship with her partner suggest how unstable their "affair" was. Unlike Surekhatai, Mangalatai had a stable marriage with a Mahar-Buddhist man.

Most significantly, both Mangalatai and Surekhatai entrenched a new patriarchy and enacted a "different" modernity and robust Dalit "body politics"[25] by donning a thick and long gold *mangalsutra* and creatively refashioning their emotional and corporeal selves.[26] Intimate bodily experiences of intentionally donning *mangalsutra* and full, clean dress emerged as powerful practices of presenting Dalit women's transformed personhood and social and moral status. Yet the body politics of erotic excess are not robust: both women acceded to the modest and moral "traditional" Brahmani patriarchy by donning its marker, the *mangalsutra*. It is through such practices as the politics of *mangalsutra* that Dalits, in their march to modernity from the early decades of the twentieth century, continually disrupt and deprive dominant classes of their norms and powers.

Mangalatai and Surekhatai twist tradition and modernity, and they innovatively redeploy marriage, chastity, and motherhood to forge new moral meanings as wives. Modern *mangalsutra* and marriage offered Mangalatai hitherto denied morality and modesty. Following Ambedkar and Navayana Buddhism, many Dalit women abandoned the black-beaded *mangalsutra* to don a necklace of yellow beads. Many elite upper-caste feminists have also abandoned the Brahmani sign of *mangalsutra*. However, such elite feminist liberatory politics rarely engages with despised Dalit women's practices. By showing off her *mangalsutra*, Mangalatai displays her womanly virtue as well as her moral and modern self. She is not merely imitating married women or seeking complicity with patriarchy as in the case of upper-caste women. She instead negotiates and renegotiates, selectively appropriating certain traditional Brahmani practices, mimicking them, and generating broad possibilities and power for herself.

The tripartite masculine patriarchal actors—the colonial and postcolonial Indian state and upper and lower castes—have looked down upon marriages of Tamasgirs and their alternative practices because they are often "open" contractual relationships that can be made and broken by free will. Hence, to them, Tamasgir women are not bound to the monogamous strictures of marriage and are therefore believed to be lower in the social and sexual ladder. However, many Tamasgir women continue to live with single partners throughout their lives. There are no clean lines. Although *mangalsutra*

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provides some respectability for monogamy, bodily autonomy, and power to married Tamasgir women, at the same time, women also internalize rigorous disciplining of their subjectivity and perform as second wives with lower status and without honor.

TAMASHA IN THE PATRIARCHAL STATE OF MAHARASHTRA

Along with private patriarchy, Mangalatai was oppressed by public patriarchy. The state and the national government adopted double standards: at times it sought to protect, include, and extend patronage to some artists, and at the same time it neglected them and further exacerbated their vulnerability. After 1960, the newly independent state of Maharashtra sought to carve out its own Marathi identity. To accomplish this task, along with elitist emphasis on "higher cultured" *sangeet natak* (song drama), the state also incorporated the supposedly "degenerate" and "rural" Tamasha art. Both art forms were popular and thrived, however differently. State agents sought to "protect" and "preserve" the so-called "adulterated" art of *lokakala* by setting up committees and boards to collate literature, publish volumes of folk genres, fund events, and even give awards to artists. Although the elite Dalits and non-Dalits looked upon Tamasha as a degraded practice, many non-Dalits along with the state also underscored its essentially Marathi identity and reappropriated the social and sexual labor of Tamasha artists in the service of the state and stigmatized it further.

As a result, some artists sought to work from inside the state machinery and entered the overt political realm. Political parties hired them to perform and disseminate their political agenda. Mangalatai, however, was not keen on entering politics:

> Some people say they are entering politics to serve the needy. However, that is not the case. My mother was also invited to do so. But nothing concrete takes places. The picture is very rosy though. *Mothe lok jagu denaar nhai* [big people will not allow us to survive there]. If we enter the field they will harass us, *chhedtaat amhala* [tease us] as they do here in Tamasha. It is the same when a girl tries to enter the field of modeling or cinema, she has to satisfy everybody [sexually] on her way to success. So it has been my mother's experience and our experience too, so I just do not want it. (Bansode)

Mangalatai was felicitated by politicians; however, that did not stop her from openly criticizing them or taking them to task for troubling artists. She did pay lip service to the state and its agents, but she wanted the state to help artists. She continues:

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I have won the Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar [Honor Award]. I would like a national award just like my mother received. Then I will feel that my art has acquired its true value. On other fronts I am *troopt* [very contented]. I have no regrets. I am happy. All Tamasha artists are in debt today, so the government should help us a little. It is all the [debt to contractors] so the government should help us a little to repay or do away with that. (Bansode)

Thus, Mangalatai wanted the state to take actions to help its non-elite, hereditary artists. As a result, she negotiated and selectively aligned with some political parties in particular moments. Mangalatai complains that the state's stricter rules were ruining the art of Tamasha; however, she is a thorough businesswoman who controlled her Tamasha empire astutely and wisely. Though Tamasha is an exploitative art form, ironically, it is also financially empowering for the Bansode family—including its male members and other employees.

DEPLOYING *KHANDANI* AS CULTURAL CAPITAL, WORK, AND OCCUPATION

Tamasha provided many generations of women and men artists with economic capital, as well as *khandani* (literally family occupation and hereditary lineage), which was/is the social and cultural capital they had acquired, accumulated, and cultivated over long years. I am deploying and building on the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualization of "capital."[27] Moreover, I am also gendering this concept. Hereditary Tamasha families deployed the cheap and readily available labor inside the family. As parents and kin, women were always already recruited to serve in roles critical to the integrity of familial labor and household as well as to the sexual economy of Tamasha. Moreover, families gendered *khandani* capital by easily associating women with dance and men with managerial work or playing musical instruments. Family members also competed with each other.

Thus, caste and cultural ideology has not only disciplined the division of labor and laborers, as Ambedkar argues, but also of sexual labor, as I illustrated above. The colonial and postcolonial state of Maharashtra and its agents, as well as upper-caste women and men have constructed Tamasgirs through an erotic gaze and denied them moral gains. Yet, Tamasgirs have repeatedly deployed the obscene and erotic and negotiated with patriarchy to work for economic gains. Hence, unfortunately they have been too easily associated with sex work. Abolitionists and anti-abolitionists have contested the distinctions between free and forced entry into sex work. A critical issue at local, national, and international levels with regard to the free and forced dichotomy has been the consent and choice of women.[28]

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Figure 2. Mangalatai putting on makeup in her makeshift tent and getting ready for her performance. Thirteen years since I first met her in 2004, in April 2017, Mangalatai continued to perform her *khandani* Tamasha at the Tamasha Pandhari, Narayangav, as she had promised. Photo by author.

Three generations of Mangalatai's family have performed in Tamasha: her grandparents, parents, and five sisters and three brothers. Mangalatai's family members drew upon and built on the *khandani* Tamasha for their daily sustenance: "We [my mother and I] had no other option. There are other businesses too but Tamasha is our Lakshmi [goddess of wealth]. This is not a business. It is our service to the public. We entertain people, forgetting our own sorrows" (Bansode). In addition to Mangalatai and her family, other families that included one hundred fifty to two hundred women and men depended on Mangalatai for their livelihood. Mangalatai also emphasizes that Tamasha was not for minting money, but to serve the various (especially sensual) needs of the larger public. To serve the audience and to earn their living, the artists often had to give up their own needs.

While other artists depended on her labor, Mangalatai in turn depended on the dictates of politicians and the state:

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The political parties dominant in the village, *sarpanch*, *patil* [headman], the landlord who gives us this place to put up our stage and the police all torture us. Anybody can come and bully us, kick us. We are so helpless . . . *hittha log hagatyat titha muth khato, nachato* [people defecate *here* and we eat our food in this very place and dance *here*]. Despite all this, I have to continue with this [complicated life], for I have one hundred fifty people to feed. We have to keep everybody happy in this line [of Tamasha], and I have been tolerating these people since I was nine. I just smile at them and get away. Sometimes the public gets mad and political party people are a great nuisance. They start shouting from the gates, *amcha paksha, amhala soda*. . . . *Vis manasa soda* [ours is the ruling party now, give us free entry. . . . Let our twenty men enter for free]. How do we live in such circumstances? (Bansode)

Thus, Mangalatai argues that Dalit women dancers are at the mercy of everybody: ordinary upper- and lower-caste men as well as big and small politicians.

Nonetheless, Tamasha also emerged as privileged practice because its modality allowed artists to escape sexual labor under specific patrons as in the case of Lavani or Sangeet-Bari forms. By contrast, Lavani artists from banner shows lacked such agency. Mangalatai comments, "We can also do that [kind of Lavani singing and dancing] by sitting in one place; however, we do not. We move around villages with a troupe of one hundred fifty and perform" (Bansode). Tamasha theater constantly traveled among villages and cities. By contrast, Lavani artists carved out stability by sticking to the city and performing only a few famous songs. Moreover, Lavani troupes were also not as big as those of Tamasha, and hence the financial risks were lower. Mangalatai further complains that unlike Tamasha, which was in the open and a public performance, some Lavani artists performed in the secluded, private *baithaks* (sittings) for political leaders, *aamdaars*, *mantris*, and *khasdars*, which degraded the art form.

Mangalatai was a thorough entrepreneur. She maintained a thick *hajeri ani jagar pustak* (register) for daily accounting. While we were talking, her son Nitinkumar demanded three hundred rupees. She immediately raised her eyebrows and questioned him: "Why do you need the money?" Nitin responded that it was for diesel for the vehicles. Mangalatai reminded him that he had bought diesel just the day before. However, instead of haggling in my presence, she preferred to give him the money from her *tijori* (locked case to store valuables), which she kept a close eye on. She also insisted that Nitin bring her the receipt.

In actual practice, Mangalatai controlled her finances in a major way. When I first met Mangalatai at Balgandharva and asked about who kept track of her income and expenses, Mangalatai mentioned that her sons and husband took care of everything. However, during deeper conversations in Kada, I found a discrepancy. Given how inconsistent Tamasha income is,

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Mangalatai was involved in making ends meet. In the middle of a performance, Mangalatai was cramming all the cash collected that evening inside her *tijori*. She sat in her special chamber in the tent donning only a bra and petticoat, calculated all the cash, and put it in the *tijori*. Unlike elite modest women, she did not seem inhibited by her minimal dress among her people. She also asked a male worker how much food grain and vegetables would be required for the entire troupe. She calculated the money to feed everyone and admonished the worker to remember that she was also paying for the grinding of wheat.

Nonetheless, despite her thorough accounting skills, Mangalatai reported that she had incurred a debt of 500,000 rupees and that Tamasha was not as lucrative as it once was. Many Tamasha artists were in debt from taking loans for weddings, schooling, clothing, and family support. Surekhatai seconds this point: "I used to fall sick but I worked undeterred. I got my brother and sisters married. I got my cousins married. Everything is settled now. I have earned up to 80,000 rupees for a show when things were fine. However, I am in debt today and have to start afresh" (Punekar). Mangalatai also laments that Tamasha was losing in the entertainment race because of decreasing audience numbers: "Now is the world of remix, and orchestra, obscene mixes and so there is less public for Tamasha" (Bansode). Other forms of performances and musical medleys pose an immense competition for Tamasha.

While commenting on the change over time and the difference between other popular forms of entertainment and Tamasha, Mangalatai reports: "Earlier the public used to announce prizes, *jalsa* was popular, and men touched women artists' hands, or pressed them as they do at [Sangeet-Bari] of Chaphula and at Aryabhushan theater. But we do not have that kind of physical proximity in Tamasha" (Bansode). Women artists in Tamasha agreed that unlike in folk forms such as Gondhal or Sangeet-Baris where the audience sits closer to the performers, Tamasha is "safer" because women perform on a platform at a distinct distance and even higher than the male audience. It provides some power to women to look down on men. Surekhatai underscores Mangalatai's views:

> Tamasha has changed its form over the recent years and has become more lewd and raunchy, because the public is not the same as earlier. Today, there is a lot of money and less of the art form, clothes and *adakari* [gestures] are changing immensely and if this is the state of the art today, what will happen to future dancers? (Punekar)

Despite this decline in their art form, both Mangalatai and Surekhatai continue to use their talents for the betterment of the community at large. Surekhatai mentions:

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I perform Lavanya. Some of them are very famous. I engaged in a few song-in-drama performances. Along with a *dholakivala* [drum player] and *petivala* [harmonium player] I visited villages and performed *daru bandi*, *hunda bandi* [anti-liquor, anti-dowry], AIDS *virodhi* [anti-AIDS] government programmes, and fetched an honorarium. I traveled to villages for this. I performed not only for men but also women [because women never attended and I wanted them to do so]. I also won a prize of two lakhs at the 1998 Lavani Mahotsava [festival]. (Punekar)

Thus, Surekhatai was involved in social activism as well.

She was sensitive to gender discrimination rampant in the society: men enjoyed watching "dishonorable" low-caste, low-status women dance on the Tamasha stage and provide entertainment to men; however, they would not allow "their own respectable" genteel women to watch these shows. Surekhatai thus questioned the double standards of some men who constructed hierarchies in caste, class, and sexuality. Hence, Surekhatai decided to perform "special" Tamasha shows *only* for women. During such events, she herself stood at the doors of the public halls to welcome women who came to watch her dance. Significantly, the Bal Gandharva Theatre has retained the annual "Ladies-Special Lavani Event" as part of the Pune Festival that celebrates Maharashtrian art and culture until today.

Such "ladies only" events were moments of empowerment for all—mixed-caste, elite, and ordinary—women, wherein women enjoyed themselves immensely and transgressed patriarchal and gendered boundaries. For example, they whistled loudly, thrusting their thumb and index finger in their mouths, waved their hands rapidly in the air, and danced in the theater just like men did. In case they could not whistle, many women brought plastic whistles to the auditorium to thoroughly enjoy and participate in the gendered sexual performances. In this instance, for once, the Tamasha theater, typically a masculine space constructed for a male gaze, engendered a liberatory possibility and power for many women.

Despite Surekhatai's positive experience with women audience members, Mangalatai remembers how Tamasha life tortured her mother and family and took everything from them:

> My mother used to dance a lot and she even delivered a baby on the stage. . Our contractor said that the Tamasha had to close down as Vithu [Vithabai] could not dance. So we were put again in a *dharmashala* [temporary rest home]. We had thought that the contractor would at least give us something to survive on for some time, but he never returned to inquire about us. When we visited our mother at the hospital, she had no food or clothes for the newborn. There was no money. So, someone suggested that we could keep the harmonium as collateral and get some money on that. But I refused because the harmonium and *chaal* [ankle bells] are Lakshmi [our wealth]. How can we take a loan on that? I went out and requested the contractor to give us some money and told him that we needed help. But he

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said that nothing could be done unless the Tamasha started again. There was another *sangeet* party in Jalgaon, and I asked them for some money, saying that I was Vithabai's daughter and that she was in the hospital. That lady agreed to give me 1,000 rupees, but I had to dance every evening. I was very happy. I bought food for everybody and mutton biryani [a delicacy they could rarely afford] for my mother and *angada topada* [clothes] for the newborn. (Bansode)

Poor Tamasha women were dependent for their survival on their performing art. They lacked economic and social resources. While mentioning some unusual *paddhat* (tradition) in a village, Mangalatai says:

> One evening I was made to sit in a vehicle and told that the show was in some other village and I got scared. I took my cousin along and visited that village. There was a typical tradition of dance in that village. The dancers were to dance in a mobile bullock cart. Just imagine this now. We got into the carts, trying to balance ourselves, and started dancing. The crowd shouted and whistled at us; they also threw things at us. It was a dreadful experience. I will never forget it. (Bansode)

Once again, the Tamasha artist was at the mercy of men. Artists also affirmed the hierarchy of wages: the main artist like Surekhatai was paid the highest and the payment decreased as one descended the ladder.

There was/is much borrowing of music, dance, and styles between Tamasha and Marathi and Hindi films. Films provided artists another opportunity to present their art and, moreover, earn an income. Mangalatai also acted in Marathi movies:

> Yesterday we received the actress Alka Kubal's phone call to act in a movie. I have also acted as a special *kalakar* in some movies. But I cannot perform in movies anymore, because I have to take care of the Tamasha business. I have to feed these families.

Thus, Mangalatai reiterated her limitations as a performer. Although Mangalatai entered the film industry, she seemed perpetually troubled by "dishonor" and the blot of her stigmatized life of a *nachee* (low-status dancer):

> People come and go, but the *batta* [blot] of a *nachanarin* [dancing woman] stays forever. *Kunibi changyla najarana baghat nhai* [Nobody looks at us with respect]. Men have their affairs. Their keeps do not move around with their children, but we are not like that. This business is fine.

As a Tamasgir, Mangalatai is aware of the potentials and problems of Tamasha: she has done very well financially; however, she believes she cannot win against her stigma as an "immoral," "disrespectful" public dancer. She is the empress of her empire, married to a man, a "good" wife and mother who bore

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sons (and daughters) and worked for their success; still, she is successful because she is a *nachee*. Her Tamasha life provides many possibilities, and at the same time, it is a potential threat.

Surekhatai did not want her children to be associated with her world of dance. Uneducated but lucratively employed, this accomplished dancer sent her children away to fancy boarding schools at Panchgani, near Pune. Due to the itinerant nature of her work, she felt that she could not otherwise give them a stable education. She wanted to educate her children and keep them away from the world of Tamasha—of dance and of her life. Yet, ironically, her sons and her family severed ties with her.

Unlike Surekhatai, Mangalatai kept her children with her throughout her life. She celebrated Tamasha and wanted her children to follow their ancestral *khandani* of Tamasha. Yet, not all her descendants are in the practice. Mangalatai believes that Tamasha is an art gifted to them by their *khandan*, and they are following this hereditary art form like other classical arts. But this *khandani* performance is conflicted: it burdens as well as offers Mangalatai financial security. Many elite Dalits still consider Tamasha as a lower form of art, especially because it stigmatizes Dalit women, and instead train their children in classical dance forms of *kathak* or *bharatnatyam*.

Mangalatai continues to live her double life of a Tamasha performer. Mangalatai and her sons are capitalizing on the sexual labor of women and consolidating their hereditary *khandani*, and in the process providing livelihood for future generations of her family. She danced with Nitin—acting like a hero-heroine duo, hugging and performing a sensual song. Their occupation demanded that a non-literate, low-status Dalit woman break social, cultural, and traditional patriarchal norms. The modern, educated, middle-class Dalits certainly disapprove(d) of such sexual labor and entrepreneurial exercises for "genteel" and "respectable" women.

CONCLUSION

I focused on the social life of Tamasha to unravel particular paradoxes of Dalit Tamasgirs. I represent details of the life experiences of an individual woman—Mangalatai—who was purposefully negotiating the conditions of her life under double patriarchy with the larger society and the historical constraints it had imposed on her. Mangalatai's life narrative presents her very real pain, suffering, and predicaments as well as her conditions as she focuses on the improvement and promotion of her self and her family. It was thus a significant project of shifting structures of historic tradition; new Dalit modernity; transgressing and consolidating patriarchy; the state's hypocrisy and appropriation of culture; as well as body politics, emotions,

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and erotic excess. This lucrative but burdensome *khandani* business contains a complex story of a woman working within a community, not merely a triumphant and straightforward rags-to-riches tale.

Deploying life narratives, I have examined both Mangalatai's victimization as well as her agency to pierce the power of double patriarchy and triple discrimination. I have analyzed the precarious materiality of Mangalatai's stigmatized double life that was shaped by her status as a Dalit woman. Mangalatai negotiated and renegotiated with the dominant power of patriarchal, feudal, familial, societal, and state structures. Her experiences of poverty and hunger, pedagogy of Tamasha training, denial of moral womanhood, strategic adherence to Brahmani patriarchy and conventionality, and alignment with particular political parties at significant historical and political conjunctures all prove that her power, however limited, is in how she possesses herself and negotiates with normative apparatuses. She, a despised woman, has thus attempted to piece together whatever is available to sustain her family and troupe.

Together, oral history and ethnographic fieldwork methods help to humanize the life narrative, challenge historical silences, and create critical spaces for Mangalatai to carve out her subjectivity and agency. I engage seriously with oral history neither to "sanitize" nor "preserve" Tamasha, but to engage with Mangalatai's own understanding of her history and community and thus provide meaning and significance to her daily life.

However biased and maybe even incomplete, Mangalatai's life history offers a deep insight into Dalitness that is not publicly well articulated but is still representative of a larger section of Dalits and their predicaments and potentials. Her individual life narrative underscores the vicious paradoxes of empowerment and disempowerment. Mangalatai's life highlights the everyday oppression of structures of caste, gender, sexuality, and her circumscribed ability to dissent and carve out her agency. However fragmented this narrative is, stories like this allow students of history to see the world the way Tamasgir women did, as ever changing, mobile, destabilized, and dangerous. Through engaging with Mangalatai's story, we learn that Tamasha has been a despised form of hereditary performance, and women have had to struggle constantly with it to preserve their honor within and without the Dalit community to enhance their social status and earn their family's livelihood. Ironically, Tamasha continues to be a degraded form of performance that has provided possibilities and power, however limited, to some women.

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NOTES

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1. Vithabai's daughter, Mangalatai Bansode sang the famous Lavani for me, when I interviewed her in the village of Kada, Ahmednagar District, on September 9 and 10, 2004. Throughout this essay, I have translated the interviews and vernacular Marathi sources into English.

2. I am departing from the traditional elite depiction of Tamasha as "rough music" and deploying the term here especially to mark the directed mockery or hostility against certain individuals who offended Vithabai. In another context, English "rough music" rituals correspond with French charivari and denote a rude cacophony (Thompson 467).

3. Instead of calling her by her formal name, I use the Marathi *tai* to address her with affection and respect.

4. I am building on my earlier work here. For details on "interlocking technologies," see Paik, *Dalit*.

5. See http://mangalabansode.com for Mangalatai's website.

6. I thank David Hardiman for this discussion.

7. Lavanya is the plural of Lavani.

8. Traditionally, Mangs made ropes, bangles, wove baskets, and so on. Mahars acted as village watchmen and assisted the village Patil (headman), helped during land border disputes, carried away animal carcasses, swept village streets and other areas, and so on.

9. Kotani unfortunately does not provide full reference with dates or details of the documents he investigated.

10. See Paik, "Forging a New Dalit Womanhood."

11. See Freitag; Hansen; Banerjee.

12. See Mehrotra; Soneji; Ramberg; Oldenburg.

13. See Schultz; Novetzke; Wakankar; Zelliot and Mokashi-Punekar.

14. See Rao; Abrams.

15. See Arondekar.

16. See Vhatkar; Dhond; Moraje; Achalkhamb.

17. See Chandanshiv and Patangankar; Kulkarni and Moraje.

18. See Bagul.

19. See Bhave; Kannabiran and Lalitha; Arnold and Blackburn; Paik, *Dalit*; Hardiman, *Feeding*; Hardiman, "Miracle Cures"; Hardiman, *The Coming*; P. Thompson; Omvedt.

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20. "Conscientization" refers to the concept of "critical consciousness." I am also drawing on Jane Thompson's insightful work on working-class women's education in England.
21. Gay has not studied Mangalatai's life but has helped me understand her.
22. I am building on my earlier analysis of caste and gender (see Paik, *Dalit*).
23. For details on the transactions in marriage and sexual economy, see Ramberg.
24. In her feminist-materialist analysis of sexual labor in India, Prabha Kotiswaran argues for the labor paradigm and against abolition by a consideration of legal framework and legislative effects in the everyday lives of female sex workers in Andhra Pradesh and Kolkata. See also Kapur.
25. For details on Dalit body politics of modernity and morality in both colonial and post-colonial periods, see Paik, *Dalit* and "Forging a New Dalit Womanhood."
26. *Mangalsutra* is the chain of yellow and black beads worn by married Hindu women as a sign of being married.
27. See Bourdieu; Swartz.
28. Scholars and activists have deeply contested if "sex work" is "work," "entertainment," "economic coercion," and "entrepreneurship." For some details, see Sukthankar.

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BRAHMANICAL ACTIVISM AS ECO-CASTEISM
READING THE LIFE NARRATIVES OF BINDESHWAR PATHAK, SULABH INTERNATIONAL, AND "LIBERATED" DALITS

MUKUL SHARMA

It is a historic day. From now onward, the liberated manual scavengers of Alwar will call themselves Brahmins. They can become high-caste Brahmins. By being Brahmins, their mind is filled with emotions and their body is shivering. They are getting high.

—Bindeshwar Pathak (Speech)[1]

I took the help of sociology and decided to help them to perform rites, rituals and ceremonies of the upper castes people.

—Bindeshwar Pathak (*Sociology* 20)

Bindeshwar Pathak is a Brahmin who works among "manual scavengers" who are considered to be among the lowest, most polluted, and most degraded "untouchable" castes by birth and are often assigned to the work of cleaning dry latrines and carrying human excreta. In the 1970s Pathak launched Sulabh International, his scheme of Sulabh Shauchalaya, and his organization Rastriya Garima Abhiyan, a national campaign to end manual scavenging. Sulabh International has emerged as one of India's most well-known endeavors for the "liberation" of scavengers and for dealing comprehensively with the problems of scavenging and sanitation.[2] Initially started in certain parts of Bihar, its work has spread to several states in India. Pathak characterizes himself as a sociologist, a social activist, a founder, a pioneer of a social-reform movement, a believer, and a go-getter who utilizes toilets as a tool for social change. And yet Pathak presents himself as a man of contradictions: a Brahmin who gets deeply involved and commits himself to manual scavengers against all odds and yet does not question Brahmanical supremacy, a Brahmin who condemns degrading caste occupation and yet constantly performs

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"high caste" rituals and customs for liberated scavengers, a Brahmin celebrated for the liberation of scavengers from age-old caste bondages and yet never sheds his "Brahminism" and "casteism" that clothe him and inform his organizational management. This essay is a narrative of Pathak's life, through his writing and that of others who have written about him. At the same time, it is a narrative of how Dalits imagine themselves and describe their lives in comparison to Pathak, whom they admire *and* critique. As this essay will also demonstrate, my interviews with Dalits became a means for them to narrate aspects of their lives.

Pathak has been recognized as a powerful agent for change. However, his agency is largely anchored in an anti-Dalit and dominant Brahmanical discourse. His personal authority, performance, technology, and development have been the key rationales that his organization has deployed for the liberation of scavengers from the 1970s to the 1990s. An emphasis on the inclusiveness of Hindu religion, Brahmin-Harijan[3] unity, pragmatic accommodation and acceptance of political and governmental developments, and power sharing among strategic groups—politicians and political parties, international development agencies, technocrats, retired and serving bureaucrats—has underscored his claim to success and change from 1990 to 2015. Pathak often invokes Gandhi. At the same time, without even mentioning him, he constantly runs Ambedkar down. Pathak never deploys the symbols of Ambedkar and other anticaste reformers, and never invokes them in his program or strategy. His ignoring of Ambedkar and idioms of radical anticaste thought speaks volumes. For example, he states:

> We never tore away Vedas or Puranas, we never burnt the Smriti, we always worked non-violently with folded hands. Powerful and mighty cannot be faulted. Change will come from above. (Speech)

Pathak never uses the term "Dalit" and does not mobilize Dalits as a political-social force. He does the good work for "them." Right from the outset, the Indian State's endorsement and encouragement of Pathak and Sulabh has been a hallmark. Pathak emphasizes that Prime Minister "Modi's dream has become my own" and that he shares the same passions as Amit Shah, the President of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), whom Pathak describes as "a man with a great soul, great thought and great ideology."[4]

The outcomes of Pathak's projects have been mixed. Most initiatives have been relatively successful in liberating the manual scavengers from their occupation. In several cases they have provided alternative Sulabh households and government toilets. However, Pathak is not interested in empowering Dalits socially, radicalizing their individual and collective political consciousness.

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...instilling in them a language of rights. Significantly, Balmikis still primarily manage Sulabh sanitation systems—public toilets and cleaning.[5] So-called "forward castes," predominantly Brahmins, dominate Sulabh's organizational structure, and the liberated scavengers mostly occupy "low caste" occupations.[6] At best, Sulabh has rehabilitated liberated scavengers by providing them alternative livelihood, vocational education, and training. However, they have been far removed from any form of Dalit politics, activism, or fight for dignity. Sulabh and Pathak have not sought to synthesize broader social values and support scavengers' solidarity outside their organizational domains.

In this essay, I focus on several of Pathak's writings, especially those published after the launch and success of his initiatives. I also engage with other works, including his biography. In addition, I draw from the fieldwork and interviews I conducted with liberated scavengers living and working in some of Pathak's most well-known project areas in Rajasthan. These interviews provide narratives about scavengers' lives and what Pathak's work and presence has meant for scavengers. While Pathak narrates his life in intense and complex ways, I am concerned with analyzing the ways in which Brahminism creeps into the production and consumption of these narratives. The narrative texts alternate between a romantic remembrance of the past, culture, and religion, and a recognition of the ways that caste crushes people. I also scrutinize Dalits'/Balmikis' narratives, which on the one hand are told in proximity to Pathak's life, but on the other are also self-narrations and presentations of their own lives. As this essay will reveal, interviews with Dalits who are associated with Sulabh reflect fragmentary narrations of their lives and changing perceptions of themselves due to Sulabh's and Pathak's interventions. My argument also illuminates how the making of Pathak in contemporary India through life narratives conflicts with and complements the making of a complex Dalit social world.

Manual scavengers clean excrement from private and public dry toilets and open drains. Based on a centuries-old feudal and caste-based custom, women from communities who traditionally worked as manual scavengers still collect human waste on a daily basis, load it into cane baskets or metal troughs, and carry it away on their heads for disposal at the outskirts of settlements. Manual scavengers are mostly from caste groups customarily relegated to the bottom of caste hierarchy and confined to making their livelihood with work that "high caste" groups consider deplorable or menial. Their caste-designated work reinforces the social stigma of being unclean and untouchable, and perpetuates widespread discrimination against them.

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Intense political discussions about and social actions for scavengers have historically centered on their "dirty" job of disposal of human excreta, their work for liberation from this traditional occupation, questions about hygiene and the caste system, the feasibility of low-cost local sanitation systems, and the concepts of purity and pollution. In certain ways, Mahatma Gandhi epitomized these concerns, and his ideas and solutions have been widely quoted, accepted, and critiqued.[7] Vijay Prashad's significant work on the sweepers of Delhi has traced one and a half centuries of their eventful history—including their origins, myths, colonial policies, national debates, early rural organizations, urban migrations, trade unions, strikes, and movements. He shows how the identity of this "untouchable" caste has been historically organized beginning with the heterogeneous urban "Mehtar" sweepers and followed by the early rural beginnings of the specific caste of "Chuhras," which was then followed by the development of urban-glossed "sweepers," religiously based "Balmikis," Gandhi's "Harijans," and finally the definitive nation-state group of "Citizens." The status of Bhangis as manual scavengers was also a serious point of debate and difference between Gandhi and Ambedkar. While Gandhi believed in manual scavenging as the basis of every service and even suggested specific educational and practical qualities for an "ideal Bhangi," Ambedkar severely criticized such attempts to link a degrading practice with ideals of service, calling it "a cruel joke played on helpless people belonging to this caste" (293). This background provides a wider context for Pathak's life narrative and the narratives of scavengers working with Sulabh.

SULABH AND BINDESHWAR PATHAK: THE PUBLIC NARRATIVE

Life narratives are both private and public, internal and external. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's thesis is that life story, where one gives an account of oneself and also where one listens to the life stories of others, is the stuff of the everyday, taking place in encounters with medical and social service bureaucracies, and performed in talk shows, political campaigns, self-help groups, and personal ads. They acknowledge that "we are not autobiographical subjects at every moment of the day, but we are called on to become autobiographical subjects in a variety of situations, a range of temporalities" (17). Paul John Eakin argues for recognizing the role of life story in everyday life at the level of the social, the political, and the individual's identity. Bindeshwar Pathak's life narrative also has a "public"—an audience, a theater, and a live performance. "Life narratives" can also describe a life that does not constitute a full narrative but is instead fragmentary in nature, describing parts of one's everyday life. These descriptors—Pathak's and Balmikis'—can also be an entry point for providing an ideological critique of life narratives.

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Pathak's life and the life of Sulabh have been described publicly and extensively, both nationally and internationally, through their own publications and research and also through publications by a number of environmental writers, practitioners, and organizations. This is how Sulabh International Social Service Organization describes itself:

> A non-profit voluntary social organisation founded in 1970 by Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak and dedicated to Gandhian ideology of emancipation of scavengers. Sulabh has been working for the removal of untouchability and social discrimination against scavengers, a section of Indian society condemned to clean and carry human excreta manually. Sulabh is noted for achieving success in the field of cost-effective sanitation, liberation of scavengers, social transformation of society, prevention of environmental pollution and development of non-conventional sources of energy. ("Meet Sulabh")

Pathak's achievements are manifold, encompassing several regions and issues. The environment friendly two-pit, pour-flush compost toilet known as Sulabh Shauchalaya is claimed to be socially acceptable, economically affordable, technologically appropriate, and does not require scavengers to clean the pits. This toilet has been implemented in more than 1.2 million houses all over India and has helped liberate over a million scavengers. Further, construction and maintenance of public toilets at public places and in slums on a pay-and-use basis is another landmark achievement for Sulabh. According to the organization, so far it has constructed and is maintaining over eight thousand such public toilets and has constructed two hundred biogas plants all over the country ("Meet Sulabh"). Pathak and his organization have received forty-two national and international awards and honors, including the Padma Bhushan and Stockholm Water Prize. The organization is also doing sanitation projects in many developing countries. Sulabh's organizational profile is equally impressive and speaks volumes about its wide spread and structure. Sulabh had 1,075 branches in twenty-nine states and three union territories in 2005, and there were 19,830 full-time associate members working on an honorarium, including social workers, administrators, planners, engineers, scientists, architects, medical doctors, sociologists, and economists (Goyal and Gupta 95).

There have been several rich, celebratory, almost identical accounts of the founding of Sulabh Shauchalaya Sansthan in 1970 (now legally known as Sulabh International Social Service Organisation and registered as an NGO). Pathak, a post-graduate in sociology and English whose doctoral work was on the liberation of scavengers through low-cost sanitation, is the central figure in all such narratives. His experience as a *pracharak* (propagandist) in the Valmiki Mukti Cell of the Gandhi Centenary Celebrations, Patna, in 1969 marked the beginning of Sulabh (S. P. Singh 95).

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The popularity of Sulabh's toilets is the result of cost-efficiency and effective funding streams. As compared to ten to fifteen liters required for conventional toilets, Sulabh's toilets require only one and a half to two liters of water to flush, which has made them less expensive to run. Simultaneously, Pathak also thought of maintaining the public toilets out of the money collected from the users (Goyal and Gupta 93). The two concepts—conversion of dry latrines into Sulabh Shauchalayas and the pay-and-use public toilet system—have gone a long way in improving personal hygiene, community health, and the economic well-being of the poor, especially scavengers.

After implementing these toilets, Pathak established the Sulabh International Centre for Action Sociology (SICAS) to launch institutes to train sons and daughters of scavengers in various vocational skills. Sulabh launched Nai Disha, a vocational training center in Alwar, a district town in Rajasthan that is 170 kilometers away from Delhi, to train scavenger women in various vocational skills, including food processing, tailoring, and beauty care. They receive a monthly stipend, and the training center shop sells the goods they make, including pickles, clothes, and bags. These women of Alwar have been called the Alwar ki Nai Rajkumariyan (The New Princesses of Alwar) (*Alwar*). Sulabh also has had success in generating biogas from human excreta by developing appropriate technology. Pathak's technological and institutional innovations have continued. For example, the Sulabh International Institute of Technical Research and Training (SIITRAT) was established in 1984 to provide technological support to the Sulabh sanitation movement. Sulabh also began efforts toward establishing a Sulabh University of Sanitation in early 2000. Pathak's new "dream project," Sulabh International Museum of Toilets, was established in Delhi.

Pathak's life narrative underlines how knowledge of technology and its effective use are intimately interwoven with the liberation of scavengers. Sulabh's technology has been an important mediating link in the interactions between Pathak and scavengers. Underlying Pathak's and Sulabh's understandings of technology, one can discern two interrelated frameworks. First, within Sulabh's professional environment, there is "technical optimism," or a belief in the modeling of sanitation on low-cost, local systems. These systems can be socially and economically engineered for the benefit of scavengers as well as for sustainability, environmental protection, health, hygiene, and rural development (Pathak, "Sulabh" 14). Pathak believes that a growing economy, technology, market, and industry will destroy untouchability. He says, "The Sulabh movement has also played its role by providing a technology and arousing the nation's conscience" (62). A second aspect of Pathak's faith in technology concerns what he has achieved for the Balmikis or Bhangis. Due to technology, Balmikis have been made free from manual scavenging and are

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receiving vocational training, public toilets are being utilized, and biogas and biofertilizer are being produced in excreta-based plants. Overall, Pathak's life narrative signifies a management-centered fabric of "entrepreneurial success" (Ramachandran 110).

Pathak views the role of technology and management as absolutely positive and constructive: "It goes against no one, no ideology and no shade of life. It benefits all and operates with the spirit of delivering good to all" (Pathak, Road 185). The constructions about technology and management draw support from economics, innovation, services, market, and growth. While this technological and managerial vision of sanitation has helped in abolishing scavenging and has had a bearing on the changing social life of Balmikis, it has not tried to unweave the complex fabric of caste society, and has not disturbed the working of the caste system on the ground, at multiple levels, in and around the Balmikis.

BEING BRAHMIN: A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

The need of the hour is to re-discover Hinduism.
—Bindeshwar Pathak (qtd. in S. P. Singh 490)

Pathak's various life narratives, including the ones he, his biographers, and his organization have written, underscore Pathak's self-awareness and agency in his life. Because Pathak is the founder, central figure, and key driving force of Sulabh, his life narrative is deeply intertwined with Sulabh's. His personality, ideas, experiments, and initiatives play a crucial and abiding role through the length and breadth of the organization. He commands deep respect because of his personal history, caste, culture, performance, and achievement. His persona is associated with courage, commitment, compassion, social skills, genius, and religious refinements. He is intensely disciplined and deeply committed to his ideology and mission. Individual agency in life narratives has been a topic of academic discussion. The historian and biographer Jill Ker Conway talks of the cultural scripts that overrun the framing of life writings in the West—the archetypal "secular hero" overcoming odds to emerge triumphant or the "romantic heroine" subjected to the people and circumstances. In feminist and Dalit writings, agency and pathways of resistance are often highlighted. Pathak's "heroic" life and his agency, as perceived by him and others on the one hand, and the limitations and boundaries of that narrative on the other, are underlined in this essay—not just through personal narrative, but also through an ideological critique of that life on questions of caste.

Pathak's narration of his life from his childhood to the present highlights his agency. Born on April 2, 1943, in a "respectable Brahmin family" of the village Rampur Baghel in the Vaishali district of Bihar, Pathak earned a

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Masters in Sociology and English and a PhD on the liberation of scavengers through low-cost sanitation. Born to an affluent family, he also experienced the decline in his family's economic status when his father, a doctor, gave up his practice and went back to the village to look after extended family. Pathak lived for eighteen years in the village, witnessing a social hierarchy characterized by caste, in which Dusadhs and Chamars were considered impure and Doms untouchable. Once his grandmother saw him touching a Dom woman, and the whole family got agitated; nobody had food that day and their mood turned grim and somber. A priest was called to conduct a purification ritual, and cow dung, cow urine, and Ganga water was poured into his mouth.

Even though he belonged to an orthodox Brahmin family, Pathak got a job in the Gandhi Birth Centenary Celebration Committee to work for the restoration of human rights and dignity of scavengers. Later, after founding the Sulabh Sansthan, he had to sell a piece of his village land and his wife's ornaments and also take loans from friends to run the organization. He slept on railway platforms and often missed meals because of his shortage of money. At times he thought of committing suicide and was on the verge of collapse and breakdown. When he submitted the Sulabh two-pit-toilet design to the Bihar government, officials were skeptical about the technology. Only after several discussions did they agree to send circulars to the local bodies and municipalities to convert from bucket toilets. In 1991, the Government of India conferred one of the highest civilian awards, the Padma Bhushan, on Pathak for his work in sanitation development and social service. Overcoming several day-to-day challenges in the implementation and expansion of his programs, including "hindrances and obstacles" over his working principles and ideology, also marks Pathak's life narrative. He writes:

> I have been working for the last 40 years but not without opposition, criticism, hindrances and barriers. . . . The factors that hindered my progress were the jealousy of some people. . . . But by the grace of God, till now, I have been able to continue to solve the problem of defecation in the open and manual cleaning of human excreta of scavengers. ("Sulabh Sanitation" 25)

While several ideologies and personalities are flexibly deployed as means and goals in Pathak's work and life, Pathak's endorsement of Gandhian vision and beliefs, particularly his perspective on and work among Bhangis, acquires a special importance in his life. Pathak candidly states:

> To rehabilitate the scavengers, I took the help of one of the tools of Mahatma Gandhi—the tool of non-violence. I did not tear or burn the books of *Vedas* or *Manusmriti*. ("Report" 6)

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According to Pathak, Mahatma Gandhi was one of the first to serve the scavengers' cause, as he struggled to liberate the Bhangis from cleaning night soil. Pathak remembers that in 1918, when Gandhi started his ashram at Sabarmati, he advised the inmates of the ashram to tackle the problem of disposal of night soil themselves and not to employ professional Bhangis for their work. Harijan Sevak Sangh, established by Gandhi, did pioneering work, according to Pathak, in this field. He writes:

> The reform movement by Sevak Sangh also aroused the social consciousness among the Harijans themselves, in general, and among the Bhangis in particular, facilitating the process of liberation. (Pathak, *Road* 71)

Gandhi renamed the "untouchable" Harijan, implying thereby that they were God's own people who must be served, just as one served God, as part of one's nationalist duty or dharma. Dalits have increasingly critiqued the term, which they find patronizing since it makes moral claims based on service and care. However, Pathak continues to use the idiom and dismisses the criticism, saying, "there is nothing wrong about the word, it means God's people. It is our prejudiced view that did not allow many of us to so address some amongst ourselves" ("Tool" 23). Pathak's appeal to a Gandhian framework while overtly reinstating his status as a Brahmin working among "scavengers" points to contradictions in the way that Pathak positions himself. One cannot doubt Pathak's sincerity in his commitment to manual scavengers. At the same time, his sympathetic representation of and concern for scavengers retains and adheres to the logic of Brahmanical supremacy. Pathak's life is thus described by one of his supporters, S. P. Singh, Chairman of Sulabh International:

> Dr. Pathak's high birth and indigence also provided the contrary qualities of the Greek tragedy to which pathos is the central emotion. If a Harijan works to help Harijans (like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar), it is not much of news; there is something clannish about it. But, if a Brahmin violates the Brahminical norm of *Chatururvanya* (four castes or Varnas) which has been a major source of oppression in India, and climbs down from his social pedestal to embrace excreta-carrying scavengers, his action is the stuff high dramas are made of. It creates mystique and a personal magic to his leadership, arousing popular loyalty, enthusiasm and a magnetic charm. This is what charisma is all about. Dr. Pathak's ability to empathise with scavengers only heightens his charismatic impact on people. (582–83)

Implicit here is an understanding that the benevolence and kindness that a Brahmin bestows on the scavenger is something for which the latter should always be obliged to the former. It remains an unequal relationship,

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a relationship between high, "noble" people, feeling for the "low" and no so noble. The "Brahmin Pathak" remains the positive, the constructive, the conclusive standard, and the scavenger retains a dubious identity. S. P. Singh also says in his praise for Pathak: "It is a co-incidence of history that most re formers were Brahmins—Raja Rammohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chatte jee, Swami Ramkrishan Paramhansa, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Da anand Swami" (571–72). The quote underlines the supremacy of Brahmins historically, emphasizing their leadership in the reform of society. S. P. Singh reiterates that Pathak "condemns Brahminism, but radiates the Brahminical virtues, like the habit of speaking truth, philanthropy, morning prayer, indif ference to wealth and encouraging people to respect all religions which, he says, preach good things of life" (575). In such biographical notes, Pathak's compassion for the scavenger is embedded in an understanding that such benevolent paternalism flows from the outstanding status of a sympathetic Brahmin and the superior qualities of Brahmanism. The "Brahmin Pathak" then becomes an agent of reform who nevertheless remains superior to the people he seeks to serve.

The Brahmin becomes an important reference point for the liberation of scavengers, not just for his admirers, but also at times for Pathak himself. Pathak thus explains:

> There has been some impact of liberation on the liberty and social prestige enjoyed by the liberated scavengers, in respect of visit to temples, engagement to *Brahmins* to supervise religious ceremonies, invitation by other caste people on ceremonial occasions, taking water from common places along with other caste people and tak ing food in hotels and other places. (*Road* 173)

Such narratives of Pathak's life, by him and others, when examined through the lens of radical caste critiques, underline the limitations and boundaries of a life that, purportedly, is centered on the liberation of scavengers. Pathak's life narrative thus cannot be separated from an ideological critique of that life to which I now turn.

BRAHMIN HYBRIDITY: CASTE, RELIGION, AND REFORM

My strategy for making toilet as a tool of social change consists of a mixed package of Sulabh's low cost sanitation technology and suitable meth ods of relieving scavengers from the oppressive stronghold of the country's caste system. This holistic approach is radically different from other caste centred social reform movement in as much as it combines technology with social idealism.

—Bindeshwar Pathak ("Tool" 28)

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Throughout his life, Pathak has attempted to integrate Gandhian social reform, technology, developmental efforts, education, and campaigns to establish "a modern and humane social order based on social justice and equal opportunity" (S. P. Singh 554). Yet, at an ideological level, his discourses are expressed in a deeply ambiguous language, often reflecting elements of eco-casteism. By eco-casteism, I mean environmental and ecological discourses that provide a defense of the caste system.[8] Eco-casteism, an ecological determinant of caste, provides a rationalization and justification of the caste system through nature. Caste identity becomes a key organizing framework for environmental thought and action. Dominant castes can justify their power through such a conception and can even become harbingers of new eco-movements. Eco-casteism, as propagated and practiced presently, does not restrict itself to fixed ideas of hierarchy and division of labor; it calls for a recovery of the traditional. Equally, eco-casteism molds itself from neo-Hinduism, whereby idioms of technology, sustainable development, benevolent paternalism, and reform from above "naturalize" Dalits within a home, community, and nation. Pathak's life deploys some of the frameworks of eco-casteism.

Pathak has often expressed the injustices and indignities meted out by the caste system in India. States Pathak, "The caste system is based on primitive hatred; it is pre-modern, inhuman and thoroughly undemocratic. The time is now to abolish it and restore human rights to the people who have long been denied of them" (qtd. in S. P. Singh 336). However, while Sulabh and Pathak articulate a critique of caste in the present day, in the same breath they often implicitly uphold and justify it in the past, as reflected in some of the writings on Sulabh and Pathak: "Sulabh rejects casteism and says it will lead to social disintegration. The *varna* system might have had some relevance in ancient times by way of, what may be called, specialisation. But, modern science and technology have made this social arrangement irrelevant" (qtd. in S. P. Singh 493). Pathak's denunciations of caste exist in an uneasy tension with descriptions of caste that sound like commemorations, echoing an eco-casteism. Occasionally, he sees in caste "an economic arrangement," which provided social frameworks and institutions for integration and skill building in society at times of war and other social pressures:

> The caste system was also an economic arrangement; carpenter, blacksmith, warriors and teachers provided basic services to make the unit (village) economically viable. The caste system also provided an iron-clad social framework which averted disintegration of the group at the time when the people were conquered and social structure came under great pressure. Education, art, music, theatre, agricultural skill, medicine, etc—all these and much more also developed outside the institutions which have become the rolling mills to produce the so-called experts today. Father trained the son to become dancer, actor, musician, teacher, killer and king. (S. P. Singh 69)

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Between caste abolition and an implicit appreciation and rationale for the caste system, where an "esteemed" version of caste and its values is upheld, "caste neutrality" enhances Pathak's and Sulabh's ambiguous discourses on caste. Both Pathak and Sulabh have no hesitation in distancing their endeavors from the reality of caste. For example, in S. P. Singh's text, Sulabh is described as

> a caste-neutral social service outfit with the macro-plan for the entire society with focus on sanitation. Sulabh technology, time-tested and globally approved, is central to its plan for social change. It works as a transmission belt for cross-border knowledge transfer to make its social services competitive and professional. (239–40)

Such sympathetic critiques of caste oppression are often repeated, revealing that Pathak-led Sulabh is simultaneously democratic and indeterminate. It is at times geared toward generating affinity between hierarchical castes, which by its very nature is a fraught proposition. Not surprisingly, we never hear of annihilation of caste in Pathak's life narrative, but rather of a forged "unity" of castes—a seemingly alluring but deceptive slogan that actually fosters "upper caste" hegemony and "lower caste" subordination. This stratification gets reinforced further through an understanding that "a rich Harijan is a Rajput and a poor Rajput is a Harijan. This is the universal truth" (S. P. Singh 61). Pathak's and Sulabh's discourses thus expose the scavengers to models of caste normativity.

In Pathak's understanding, nation is also defined as "natural" (S. P. Singh 517), and a central and steady component of this "natural nation" is perceived as Hinduism. Pathak discursively fashions a Brahmanical Hinduism in his rhetorical, visual, social, and political strategies. Through constant invocations of Vedas and Manusmriti, he reproduces the dominant Hindu order (S. P. Singh 79). For Sulabh, glorious Hindu traditions flow from the Vedas: "The *Vedas*, Dr. Pathak says, are not the book of religion, they are records of profound human thoughts on mysteries of nature" (qtd. in S. P. Singh 59). Sulabh insists on identifying the scavengers as part of the Hindu fold, incorporating them "safely" within a Hindu belief system with its supposed glorious golden past.

In the foreword to S. P. Singh's text, Pathak projects the Sulabh model on Indian values and simultaneously offers a scathing critique of the West, "which tends to view the world as the vast extension of its own culture." In such a situation, Pathak declares a rediscovery of Hinduism, which he states was eroded due to Western ethos and colonialism (490). Sulabh's prescriptions for the protection of the environment through improved sanitation

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often eulogize ancient Hindu texts, particularly the Manusmriti and the Vishnupuran, which he calls "the most respected Aryan scripture" (S. P. Singh 59). Sulabh International's "Museum of Toilets," Pathak's special project, has a detailed note on the "Aryan Code of Toilets—1500 BC," which draws on the Manusmriti and the Vishnupuran to list elaborate defecation codes, including a "code for married people," an "ablution code," a code "for different classes," and "separate rules for those who are sick or infirm." For Sulabh, these are "Toilet Etiquettes" that fall under the rubric of ancient Hindu scriptures ("Sulabh" 12–14). The scriptures prescribe elaborate drills for defecation practices among these different groups. For example, the *savarna*, or the twice-born, must roll the sacred thread to a smaller size and put it on the right ear. The Vishnu Purana also states that the left hand be cleaned ten times and right seven times ("Aryan Code"). Sulabh's extolling of such defecation practices is ludicrous, given that it was precisely such texts that prescribed slavery for the "low" castes and sanctions for the "upper" castes, and asserted the Brahmin's supremacy as the will of God. It is of course equally well known that a substantial section of Dalits has severely and bitterly condemned such texts and scriptures, which prescribe rituals and social and religious orders to accommodate the very existence of the caste system.

Pathak is also committed to celebrating certain Hindu religious festivals in his work, particularly Mahashivratri and Chhath. Such festivals are elaborately observed at an organizational level among the Balmikis associated with Sulabh, and Pathak observes these holidays publicly. According to Sulabh, Brahmanical rituals and Hindu religious practices are cultivated to develop and foster common ties and smooth pathways to universal brotherhood (Pathak, "Maha Shivaratri" 8). Mahashivratri is an important occasion for Sulabh, with the belief that "Bhagwan Shiva is worshipped right from the north to far south, and from the east to the western parts of our country as supreme deity" (9). Led by Brahmins, its ritual and rites are in fact about believing and perpetuating concepts of sacred and sinful, high and low, purity and pollution, privileges and denial. The festival celebrations mark annual highlights in Pathak's life:

> The great festival is a regular celebration at the campus of Sulabh International in New Delhi. This year the holy day fell on February 27. . . . 1,25,000 *shivalingas* [phallic emblem of God Shiva, symbolizing creative power] were made from the soil brought from the Yamuna *ghats* [landing or bathing place at a riverside]. Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak and Mrs. Amola Pathak with their entire family sat along with the workers of Sulabh International and the liberated scavenger ladies from Alwar and Tonk in Rajasthan as well as Ghaziabad. Chants of Har Har Mahadeva reverberated all along the day. . . .The holy lingams made by all the participants were placed in the rectangular spot meant for placement. Learned Pundits kept on

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> reciting holy *mantras* [sacred verses, especially from the Vedas] and *shlokas* [Sanskrit couplets consisting of several lines] with the offerings of *gangajal* [water of river Ganga], flowers, fruits, *naivedyam* [food consecrated to a deity] . . . on the lingams by all engaged in worship. This was followed by *havan* [oblation with fire] performed in the *kund* [tank] meant for this purpose. (Pathak, "Maha Shivaratri" 19)

A similar celebration occurs around the Chhath festival, an ancient Hindu and the only Vedic festival dedicated to the Sun God:

> Chhath is an important festival dedicated to the Sun God. Chhath puja is mainly observed in Bihar, Jharkhand, Eastern Uttar Pradesh and the Tarai [plains] of Nepal. . . . The four-day festival is celebrated with strict purity and abstinence, for prosperity and well-being, twice in a year, in the months of Chaitra and Karthik. Like every year, the festival was celebrated at the residence of Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, Founder of the Sulabh Sanitation Movement . . . with fast, *puja* [worship] and different types of rituals and offerings. (Pathak, "Chhath Celebration" 9)

Pathak's and Sulabh's much-publicized initiatives to take the liberated manual scavenger women for a dip in the Ganga river at Varanasi and Sangam—which is the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mythological Saraswati at Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh—and the performance of rituals with priests at the Maha Kumbh Mela also inform how Hinduism is naturalized in Pathak's life and becomes a key frame through which religious and cultural practices are conceived and conducted in his life narratives. In June 2011, Pathak took a group of 207 liberated scavenging women from Alwar, Tonk (Rajasthan), and Arrah (Bihar) to Varanasi to take a "dip in the holy river before proceeding to one of the sacred Hindu shrines, Kashi Vishwanath temple, for offering prayers before Jyotirlinga of Lord Shiva" ("Liberated Scavengers on Pilgrimage" 6). In February 2013, around one hundred liberated scavenger women from Rajasthan's Alwar and Tonk districts took a dip in the Sangam and performed puja at the Maha Kumbh Mela. According to Pathak, this action was an "effort towards social upliftment" ("Liberated Scavengers in Kumbh" 21).

Significantly, life narratives of and by the liberated Balmikis who have taken the holy dip also see this moment as a kind of rebirth in Hindu religion and a reaffirmation of their belief in the holiness of sacred places, priests, and divine experiences. Narrating in an interview what was perhaps the most important moment of her life, Guddi Athwal of Alwar says: "The holy dip was like a rebirth for a low caste woman like me. I felt as if I was reborn as part of the Hindu society." In another interview, Shakuntla Chamere too recounts her life thus: "The dip in the holy rivers of Varanasi and Allahabad washed away all our sins of the past and present birth." In her interview, Lalita Nindania says, "It was an unforgettable experience—walking, praying and dining with

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the Brahmins." These life narratives by the liberated scavengers operate within a dominant Hindu paradigm. Sulabh also upholds this narrative of a "life changing experience":

> "It is an out of this world experience for us. We want to stay here as long as we can. This day will remain most memorable for us. We now feel we have really joined the mainstream led by Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, who is really an incarnation of god for us. He is leading us to sacred places where even our shadow could not be tolerated in the past. He is making us mingle with the high and mighty," said most of the liberated women as they emerged out of the Vishwanath temple after saying their prayers. (Pathak, "Liberated Scavengers on Pilgrimage" 6)

In the process of actions like this, however, Balmikis' distinct religious traditions often lapse or are coopted under dominant Hindu idioms. The Balmikis associated with Sulabh habitually become normal appendages to great Hindu cultural traditions. For example, Sulabh is spectacularly silent on Valmiki Jayanti, a festival that cherishes Valmiki as the ancestor and God of Balmikis, and this is frequently reflected even in narratives of the Balmikis of Sulabh. Narrating the role of festivals in her life, twenty-two-year-old Aman Chaumar, daughter of Ushan Chaumar (President of Sulabh International) recounts in an interview:

> We have a significant focus on Mahashivratri and Janmashtmi. We also celebrate normal Hindu festivals like Holi and Diwali. The Balmiki community in Hajuri Gate and other Balmiki colonies have traditionally celebrated Valmiki Jayanti and continue to do so. However, now we, the liberated scavengers, hardly participate in Valmiki Jayanti.

Meera Nindania, who works in Nai Disha, a vocational training center that Sulabh launched in Alwar in 2003 to rehabilitate scavengers, provided a similar account in an interview. A day in her life begins at the center with several *vandanas* (prayers) that worship Hindu deities like Shiv, Ganesh, Lakshmi, and Saraswati, along with a *vandana* for Sulabh. In the Amergarh-based center of the organization, she says, "I am a Hindu because Ram and Balmiki are the same. I have all the Hindu deities in my home. We only celebrate Hindu festivals in the vicinity of Sulabh and Nai Disha." Yet, the majority of the Balmikis at Hajuri Gate and in other Balmiki colonies of Alwar who are not part of the Sulabh program continue to celebrate Valmiki Jayanti as their long-cherished festival. Naresh Lohra describes in detail how the festival is a significant event in their lives, and a collective cultural expression of thou-

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> On *Sharad Purnima*, Balmikis of different colonies take out the tableau of Valmiki, with their flags, songs and *bhajans*. The old temple of Valmiki in Lal Khana Arvaipura *mohalla* becomes the nerve-center of our festival. The day-long festival ends in the evening at Teej ki Swarg road, after many rich cultural performances. The community really looks forward to the festival and works hard and long to celebrate it.

These interviews provide windows into Dalit's voices, life narratives, and their self-presentation. In the next two sections, I intertwine Pathak's and Sulabh's understandings of dirt, filth, and pollution with the perceptions of liberated scavengers about their lives. I examine additional interviews with liberated scavengers, whereby they selectively construct their own past, present, and future in light of the role and implications that Pathak and Sulabh have in their everyday lives. Liberated scavengers attempt to make sense of their lives through Pathak's persona, as he is a constant point of reference in their life. While their interviews highlight the "positive" role Pathak has in their lives, stories, taboos and restrictions also emerge in these life narratives.

BRAHMIN AND BHANGI LIVES: DIRT, FILTH, AND POLLUTION

> *The early Aryan bequeathed to their future generations a dual sense of sanitation. . . . This balanced approach towards sanitation and the science of personal and community health were maintained till the Puranic age. . . . The Manusmriti says that all our organs must be kept clean and in good condition by daily wash and ablution. Men and women shall wash away their dirt with water everyday—this is the means to cleanse their body, but reading the Gita will keep their mind and heart clean of all impurities.*
>
> —S. P. Singh (261–62)

In the Hindu caste system, scavengers—the former "untouchable" castes of Bhangis, Balmikis, and Mehters—were conceptualized as sources of dirt and filth, polluting the "pure" Hindu cultural and social environment. Concepts of purity and pollution have been inherent parts of Brahmanical Hinduism, signifying that something or someone does not belong to them, is an outcaste, and is an untouchable. Moreover, for "Brahmin" and "untouchable" to have any meaning, there has to be a system of belonging, necessitating the assigning of different caste-based roles to separated caste groups. For there to be "order" in Hindu society, there has to be a conceptual and normative assumption about what a "natural" society should look like and what, or who, should be touched or untouched. Pathak traces the existence of scavengers and the system for disposal of "night soil" through Hindu texts, and sums up:

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> Scavenging has been existing in India for a long period and the persons engaged in cleaning, carrying and disposing of night soil have been known as scavengers or *Bhangis*. . . . This sub-caste or occupational group was placed at the lowest level and was labelled as "untouchable" in the traditional social system. The scavengers were not included in the caste system; rather they were treated as the polluted out-caste because they clean night soil. They were not allowed to touch the high caste people and, hence, all types of social interactions were forbidden for this sub-caste of scavengers. The demeaning and sub-human occupation of scavenging was their fate under the traditional system and they were not permitted to take up any other job according to their likings, merits and capabilities. (*Road* 159–60)

The paradoxes within Pathak's discourse are, however, soon reflected when the same scavengers are romanticized and their "degraded" occupation upheld as coming "naturally" to them, as they are the "most skilled" in the work of cleaning and sweeping. Mahesh Kumar Singh, a social volunteer with Sulabh, states:

> Broom has been an identity marker of Balmikis. You cannot take away their brooms and traditional skills. That is why, in the public toilets of Alwar, built by Akhil Bharatiya Pariwar Kalyan Parishad, a branch organization of Sulabh, the Balmikis and ex-scavengers are the best skilled workers because of their long tradition.

Similarly, there is rhetoric within Sulabh to teach the art of cleanliness and hygiene to the Bhangis "from above." At the Nai Disha office in Alwar, Rajeev Kumar Singh, a Sulabh volunteer, articulates:

> The Bhangis lived in hell, without any consciousness of a human being. They had no social or political awareness. We have given them lessons in cleanliness, hygiene and purity, and how to come cleanly at the center, how to maintain decorum, and where to find solace, by organizing skill-building and training, and also by creating cultural and religious activities.

Sulabh's power is most visible in the ways that a section of Balmikis internalize these discourses within their own life stories. Balmikis understand and express dirt, filth, and pollution as a crisis of their inner nature ingrained in their bodies and minds; in other words, at the level of their individual identity. At the level of collective identity, too, they not only think that their community is responsible for their age-old degrading status but also blame their own shared habits, customs, and attitudes for their debased standing. Their self-perception and esteem in their narration of their own lives is very low, insofar as they perceive themselves as responsible for their stigma and ostracism. The solution they offer for removal of all dirt, filth, and pollution is deemed to be a simple one—a return to the Brahmin, a Brahmin savior, his values,

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and purported laws. Naresh Lohra of Hazuri Gate in Alwar, who is a Balmiki associated with Sulabh, says:

> We have had so much of dirt within us—in our living and our working. Take, for example, our relationship with pigs, because of which also we have been seen negatively in the eyes of Hindus. Our language, our habits, our customs—are doomed. We have had no history of our own.

Lakshmi Nindania, another active and vocal figure of Sulabh and who has also traveled nationally and internationally as a liberated and rehabilitated scavenger from Alwar, expresses a similar perspective:

> Since ages we were living in hell. We were dirty. We were in fact not used to bathing regularly or cleaning up our houses properly. We only had a broom to identify ourselves with, and to show it to the world. Nobody else but we only are responsible for our present state.

Such articulations of negative images about themselves and their past lives show that the Balmikis of Sulabh indulge in self-censure and self-condemnation instead of critiquing larger structures of caste oppression. They blame themselves for their own condition, their exploitation, and their marginalization. Sulabh, through its constant references to Hindu idioms, has inculcated in them the idea that they can redeem themselves only through integration within the Hindu society. Blaming oneself for all one's ills serves as an important reference point and helps in justifying Sulabh's Hindu orientation. Balmikis' attempts at acculturation and assimilation into prevailing Hindu concepts suggests that in a sense, Sulabh polices them within a set of boundaries, and they in turn police themselves to remain contained within those confines. The Balmikis of Sulabh are constructed, and they in turn construct themselves as "naturally" Hindu. Such social, cultural, and religious association with Hinduism without a trenchant critique of the political economy and the socio-religious basis of caste is far removed from a radical Dalit discourse. In fact, Dalit is a term that the Balmikis of Sulabh have not heard, a word that is never used in any of Sulabh's literature. Thus says Meera Nindania, "I know what is a Balmiki, I know what is a Bhangi, I know what is a Hindu, but I do not know what is a Dalit."

Pathak and Sulabh have hardly been critiqued from this perspective, and various scholars and environmentalists have constantly eulogized their work. However, we get a rare glimpse of such criticism when Bhasha Singh writes:

> The difference between these [Gandhi's and Ambedkar's] points of views is the same as that between reformation, charity and benevolence on the one hand and revolt for rights, change and liberation on the other hand. . . . It is not that these two

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points of view are not present today. . . . That's why we have among us today the princesses of Alwar. . . . The people who have liberated them don't tire of proclaiming how they helped these hapless women out of that hell and how they reached where they are now. . . . The other way out—that of liberation through change—doesn't pass through the business of flush toilets. Neither does this second way try to suggest that the practice of manual scavenging will die out if toilets with running water are made available—this is because the people walking this road know that the person cleaning the flush toilets will also be someone from their own community. (xxxvi)

In contrast to Pathak and Sulabh, several organizations and initiatives have emerged in the country since the 1970s, focusing on manual scavengers and working for the eradication of scavenging through campaigns, movements, legislation, and judicial interventions. Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA), initiated in the early 1990s and led by Bezawada Wilson from the Madiga community, is a national movement committed to the total eradication of manual scavenging and providing all scavengers with dignified occupations. They have taken a multidimensional approach to this issue: demolishing dry latrines, organizing and mobilizing the community against the practice of dry-latrine cleaning, placing evidence before the state on the violation of the Prohibition of the Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013, filing public interest litigation in the Supreme Court against the state, and working against the caste system and for the dignity of Dalits in general (Namala and Divakar 16). While primarily focusing on the rights of manual scavengers, SKA is also committed to working with all those engaged in "unclean" occupations, such as sewage workers, pit workers, and sweepers who fall within the ambit of *safai karmacharis*. SKA has been instrumental in eradicating manual scavenging in hundreds of districts through their campaigns. It works in close cooperation and collaboration with other Dalit and human rights organizations committed to the rights of Dalits and other marginalized communities in general and *safai karmacharis* in particular. From 2015 to 2016, SKA organized a Bhim Yatra (a march in the name of the great Dalit leader Ambedkar) to highlight the continuing practice and plight of manual scavenging in the country. The Yatra began on December 10, 2015, in Assam and concluded in Delhi on April 14, 2016, on Ambedkar's 125th birth anniversary after covering 35,000 kilometers across thirty states in 125 days. Taking on issues of manual scavenging, dry latrines, sewers, and septic tanks under the theme of "Stop Killing Us," the Yatra demanded that the Government of India "tender an apology to the safai karamachari community for the historical injustice and centuries of humiliation of making us manual scavengers" and "eliminate manual scavenging immediately, without any further delay or postponement" (Safai Karmachari). They gave a clarion call: "We,

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Safai Karmachari Andolan, shall struggle and build solidarity to reclaim our dignity, equality and human personhood. Through eradicating manual scavenging, we will break the link imposed by the caste system between birth and dehumanising occupations" ("Safai Karmachari").

DALIT: MIRROR IMAGE OF BRAHMIN PATHAK

The constructions of the supposed "superiority" of Brahmanism have disturbingly rubbed themselves off on a section of scavengers as well. These scavengers see their traditional occupation as humiliating and degrading. Yet, it is troubling to see many of those associated with Sulabh speaking in caste-ridden idioms, where the power of the Brahmin is retained and further institutionalized. Their "liberation" at times leads them to want to leave behind the remaining scavengers as they position themselves closer to Brahmins and "high caste" people, justifying their thoughts and actions in the name of pride and prestige. Pathak writes with satisfaction:

> These liberated scavengers declared with a sense of pride and prestige that they were no more engaged in scavenging. . . . Moreover, most of them made it clear that they were not having any interaction with those persons who were still engaged in the scavenging work. (*Road* 174)

Usha Chaumar pointedly expresses this new Brahmanism in her story. Chaumar was a scavenger in Alwar until she became associated with Sulabh. She is now the president of Sulabh International and a visible face of the organization. Residing in the Hazuri Gate colony of Balmikis at Alwar, Usha Chaumar retells her life by idealizing Pathak:

> He is a Brahmin, a Pandit, a God for us. In my future life, I would like to see myself as a Brahmin, a Pandit, a forward caste person like him. I cannot identify myself now as a Balmiki.

"Our saviour and God incarnate" is how Dolly, the youngest liberated girl from Tonk, Rajasthan, characterizes Pathak. Lakshmi Nindania sees Pathak as "a God sent on earth for our lives. We too would like to be a big Brahmin, a big man—travelling on the paths shown by him!"

It may be argued that while attempting to mimic the figure of the Brahmin, the Balmikis of Sulabh also challenge caste structures by expressing the right to inhabit "upper caste" bodies. At the same time, there is a deep expression of loyalty toward Brahmins. Such idealization of the Brahmin figure and the absorption of its epitomized model in Pathak, not only retains a hierarchized caste-Hindu framework but also reinstates the superiority of

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the Brahmin as the norm. Pathak, functioning through a Brahmanical and sympathetic lens, creates a kind of scavenger he is comfortable with, which he wants and wishes to see, and the scavenger in turn often adopts a similar language when describing his or her life. The Balmikis of Sulabh are forever obliged and indebted to the Brahmin Pathak (the great, the absolute, the chosen representative of God) for feeling compassion for them. The Brahmin continues to maintain a careful watch over his "subjects." It is a relationship between a father and his children and between the learned and the uneducated. Pathak deploys an inbuilt language of charity that combines a hidden, condescending attitude toward the scavenger and a kindness for the Brahmin. With all its goodwill, such empathy preserves and maintains an unconscious Brahmanism. Pathak in a sense symbolizes this ambivalence of caste reform.

The narratives of Pathak, an acclaimed social activist working for the liberation and rehabilitation of scavengers, resonates with such features in complex ways. Elements of eco-casteism crisscross here with concerns for scavengers. The messy collage of Indian environmentalism is underscored in Sulabh and Pathak, where caste-blindness or a tacit endorsement of Brahmanical Hindu faith function in tandem with the belief in the toilet as a tool for social change. Even while attempting to transform hegemonic caste practices, Pathak's life journey ends up reinstating and reaffirming them. The life narratives of the liberated scavengers, revealed through various interviews, often reconstruct and represent their lives in Pathak's shadow, rarely intruding or desecrating the sacred spaces and tastes of the Brahmin world.

NOTES

1. Pathak delivered this speech at the book release of Mahatma Gandhi's *Life in Color* in New Delhi on October 5, 2016. At this event, Usha Chaumar, President of Sulabh International and a liberated manual scavenger, also announced with chants of Vedic mantras that they all have now turned into "authentic" Brahmins.
2. Pathak and Sulabh use the term "liberation," which is questionable, as it operates within a conservative Brahmin savior model that, arguably, diminishes Dalit's agency.
3. Pathak explicitly deploys this Gandhian terminology, rather than the term "Dalit" for describing scavengers.
4. When Narendra Modi celebrated his sixty-fifth birthday on September 17, 2015, Pathak composed a *qawwali* (a style of devotional music) "Modi ka Sapna Bana Liya Apna" (Modi's Dream Has Become My Own). Pathak composed another song, "Mahima Ganga Kasi Ki" (In Praise of Ganga of Kasi), about how Modi's heart beats for Mother Ganga and Kasi (Varanasi, Modi's parliamentary constituency). He composed a third song on Modi's Pakistan visit, describing how Modi is spreading the message of peace and brotherhood in the lands of Buddha and Gandhi. After his visit to the BJP president Amit Shah's birthday on October 22, 2016, Pathak described Modi as "a man who's exemplary in his ways, an exceptional thinker and humanist" ("Historical Visit").

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5. Balmikis is another name for scavengers, who have been liberated from their traditional caste-based occupation. Their management of the Sulabh-built toilets and related sanitation systems on the ground reinforces caste-based roles and their status.
6. My fieldwork at worksites and offices of Sulabh in Delhi, Bihar, and Rajasthan support this claim.
7. See the *Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 5, which contains Gandhi's views on Bhangis.
8. For a larger discussion of eco-casteism, see my *Green and Saffron: Hindu Nationalism and Indian Environmental Politics* and *Caste and Nature: Dalits and Indian Environmental Politics*.

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INVISIBILITY OF "OTHER" DALITS AND SILENCE IN THE LAW

SUMIT BAUDH

"An ounce of illustration is worth more than a pound of theory."
—B. R. Ambedkar (qtd. in Rodrigues 20)

INTRODUCTION

For the first time, the 2011 census of India counted a population "other" than male or female. This essay takes a cue from the census and traces the invisibility of "other" Dalits, while attempting to break the silence about them in the law through life narratives. Formerly considered "untouchable" in the deeply unequal and hierarchical caste system of India, Dalits are also known as Scheduled Castes (SC) in the legal parlance.[1] The invisibility of "other" Dalits and the silence about them is located in an emerging legal moment in which transgender persons are compared with "untouchable" Dalits, but there is no legal understanding of persons who are *both* transgender and Dalit.

In addition to the usage of "other" in the census, the use of this term in this essay includes sexual orientations, identities, and expressions, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer. The use of "other" Dalits follows a consciously inconsistent terminology: while "other" is borrowed from its official legal usage in the 2011 census, the corresponding legal term for Dalits would be SC. There is an ideological significance of the word Dalit that does not carry well in SC's legal terminology.[2] This essay is conscious of and recognizes that Dalit ideology.

Other definitions and concepts need to be laid out and clarified. Usages of "upper caste" and "lower caste" in formal legal literature implicitly reinforce caste hierarchies. This essay makes a departure from this legal reiteration of caste hierarchies. In the place of "upper caste" this essay uses "dominant

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caste" and instead of "lower caste" it uses "subordinate caste" in recognition of the systemic domination and subordination within caste hierarchies.

Compared to more settled areas of the law in India, legal understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) is relatively new and emerging. This essay is timely, situated in the aftermath of the recriminalization of same-sex sexual acts by the Supreme Court of India in 2013, wherein the court upheld the constitutional validity of a colonial-era sodomy law (*Koushal* 97). Though seemingly contradictory, in another judgment merely four months later, the Supreme Court directed the Government of India to consider transgender persons as a "socially and educationally backward class" and to extend "reservations" to them (*NLSA* 2). This emerging judicial understanding of gender and sexuality is contradictory: on the one hand, it creates a protected category for transgender persons, but on the other hand, it implicitly places some of the same transgender persons—for example, hijras—within the purview of criminality for their perceived sexual acts. In 2009, four years prior to this recriminalization, the Delhi High Court decriminalized consensual same-sex sexual acts on constitutional grounds, specifically rights to privacy, human dignity, equality, and non-discrimination (Articles 21, 14, 15, Constitution of India; *Naz* 105). The Delhi High Court also drew comparisons with other colonial-era laws, for example, the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 that had historically imposed criminality upon transgender persons (*Naz* 41–42). This judicial analogy of the criminalization of "unnatural offences" with erstwhile "criminal tribes" was brief and made in passing. A one-paragraph reference did not develop the analogous comparison in any detail. Later, in another case, the Supreme Court of India drew a similarly passing analogy between transgender persons and "untouchable" Dalits in the following words:

> Our society often ridicules and abuses the Transgender community and in public places like railway stations, bus stands, schools, workplaces, malls, theatres, hospitals, *they are sidelined and treated as untouchables*, forgetting the fact that the moral failure lies in the society's unwillingness to contain or embrace different gender identities and expressions, a mindset which we have to change. (*NLSA* 2, emphasis mine)

Some of the transgender community are not just "sidelined and treated as untouchables," some of them *are* "untouchables," as the narratives in this essay testify. If the Supreme Court decision paid attention to this overlap of transgender and Dalit status, it may have resulted in a different decision with a better understanding of SOGIE and the law in India. At the stage of completing this essay, the Supreme Court has agreed to reconsider the decision of 2013

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and a Special Bench of five unnamed judges are slated to hear the case afresh in a "curative petition."

What is the scope and significance of the invisibility of "other" Dalits and the silence about them? Is it an identity claim, and does this essay have relevance only for an understanding of the law in relation to this subgroup? The absence of explicit legal remedies against violence and discrimination based on the intersection of caste and SOGIE is compelling, especially given the abundance of legal remedial measures on caste alone (with varying degrees of success). This essay's attempt to uncover the invisibility is not just a claim to identity or of recognition for "other" Dalits (although there is no harm in making that claim). A study of this invisibility is a deeper critique of the law, and it portends greater consequences for more than just this particular group. An understanding of the production of invisibility of "other" Dalits through the narratives expounded in this essay can help in developing an insight that could at least broaden the legal remediation based on SOGIE beyond the decriminalization of sodomy. At a broader level of law and legal scholarship, such narrativizations can aid in tracing other invisibilities that are part of the law and social fabric of domination (for example, with regard to Dalit women and Dalit religious minorities).

This essay is structured in three parts. The first part starts with a self-narrative, an anecdote about this author that shows the lack of protective legislation against homophobic and transphobic violence in India. This lack of legal protection is contrasted with a surfeit of formal legal remedies that are based on caste. While developing this combined understanding of caste and its intersection with SOGIE, this anecdote also foregrounds the author's personal positioning. Next, the essay goes on to tell a personal narrative of a disabled trans person, which shows the law's inability to grasp multiple identities and statuses based on disability, ethnicity, caste, and SOGIE. The following part grapples with theoretical ideas about standpoint epistemology, personal narratives, experiences, and situated knowledges, thus developing a critical understanding of law and legal theory. It underlines that an insufficient understanding of caste in the legal scholarship is puzzling (and unacceptable to me) because of the salience of caste to inequalities in India.

The task of showing something that is invisible and of breaking silences is challenging. To do this, this essay relies on and deploys personal narratives and experiences. Further, it draws upon other eclectic sources from feminist scholarship, critical race theory (CRT), and Dalit scholarship. The final part of the essay brings the theoretical understanding to application, and "breaks the silence" in a composite area of the law and social movements, illustrating some of the probable factors that generate the silence and the invisibility

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1. TRACING INVISIBILITY

THROUGH AN EXPERIENCE OF INSULT—NIGGER, FAGGOT, CHAKKA, CHAMAR

I was about to enter the Haus Khas Park, and as usual I had workout music blasting in my earphones. I saw two men on their way out staring at me. There was a gap of a few seconds between the music when I heard one of them say, *chakka-re-chakka* (faggot-o-faggot). This happened so fast that it took me a moment to grasp. These men had left the park by then and the next track had started blasting. I was running and thinking to myself:

Did that man really say what I heard?
Did he say that about me?
Why?
Was it my clothes?
Was it my gait?

A fellow queer runner has said to me often that I run like a girl. It was harmless banter. Yet in this moment, that harmless banter came back to me. I checked my gait. I wondered if my short shorts were too short (see Fig. 1).

I felt insulted, humiliated, and furious all at the same time. The verbal abuse echoed in my ears louder than the blasting music. I tried to pacify myself by thinking that it was just two obnoxious men and no one else heard them. It was early morning and there were very few people in the park at the time. Even then, this brief moment of abuse had changed the whole atmosphere and experience of the park for me. True, no one other than me had heard these men, but the park did. In my fertile imagination, every little leaf of every tree was now whispering this incident. The foliage of the park had heard the insult, some of this foliage was mocking me, some of it was sympathetic, some just did not care. It vitiated the whole atmosphere of the park, which is otherwise very dear to me.

Venting my rage by writing about this incident on social media, I wanted to make collective sense of it with the help of my friends and acquaintances, a group including lawyers, scholars, activists, and a judge (Baudh, Status). A Judicial Magistrate in India noted that Section 504 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) of 1860 would apply. Section 504 identifies insult and insulter in these words:

> Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace—Whoever intentionally insults, and thereby gives provocation to any person, intending or knowing it to be likely that such provocation will cause him to break the public peace, or to commit any other offence.

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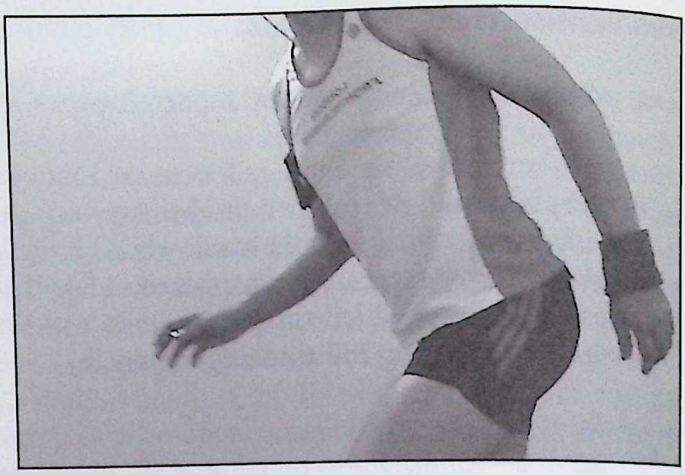

Figure 1. Illustrative self-portrait, May 2015, New Delhi.

Did the men intend "to provoke breach of the peace"? I do not know their intention. If I were to speculate, I would think their intention was to entertain themselves with a kind of commonplace humor. If I were to dig deeper into their intention, I might speculate that they were motivated by prevailing ideas of masculinity. My skimpy clothes and my gait might have been contrary to such ideas. Consciously or unconsciously, these men were social agents in enforcing a certain unwritten code of masculinity. I am not about to psychoanalyze these men any further. It is sufficient to note that the language of Section 504 does not seem to apply to this incident.

That said, Section 504 could well include an insult based on caste, and yet there is an additional and special legal remedy for that. The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989, referred to short as the SC/ST Act or PoA, is a remedial legislation for the prevention of "atrocities" against the members of the SC and the Scheduled Tribes (ST). The SC and the ST are two different legal categories: SC connotes caste status—that is, it is associated with the practice of "untouchability"—and ST connotes tribal status. In a listing of practices and circumstances in which caste-based violence is commonly inflicted, Section 3 of the SC/ST Act provides a list of offences that are legally considered an "atrocity." In this list, Section 3 (1) (x) states:

> Whoever, not being a member of a SC or a ST, intentionally insults or intimidates with intent to humiliate a member of a SC or a ST in any place within public view, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to five years and with fine.

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I am a member of an SC, and I think these men intended to humiliate me. That would be insufficient to invoke the SC/ST Act because it penalizes only certain kinds of insults that are inflicted by non-SC or non-ST persons upon SC or ST persons. Presuming that these men were non-SC/ST, for Section 3 (1) (s) to apply, they should have insulted me on the basis of my caste. For example, if they were to say, *chamar-o-chamar*, that would qualify as an insult based on caste.

Judicial decisions have confirmed the use of caste names as a means of insult. Drawing upon an analogy with abusive name-calling like "nigger" or "negro" for African Americans, the Supreme Court of India has stated:

> [U]ses of the words "pallan", "pallapayal" "parayan" or "paraparayan" with intent to insult is highly objectionable and is also an offence under the SC/ST Act. It is just unacceptable in the modern age, just as the words "Nigger" or "Negro" are unacceptable for African-Americans today. (*Arumugam* 2)

This analogy of racialized slurs like "nigger" with caste names in India presents a combined understanding of insults based on caste and race. In a similar vein, there could be a combined understanding of insults based on caste and gender. Although *chakka-re-chakka* is not an insult based on caste, the intention to insult is analogous to insults based on caste. Aside from broad analogies such as these, I ask myself, would I have felt any more or less insulted if I were called *chamar* instead of *chakka*? The answer is no. I would have felt equally insulted at being called either of the two. The former is a slur based on caste, while the latter is a slur based on misogyny and patriarchal ideas of masculinity. They are both intended to secure a certain systemic compliance of subordination, casteist and patriarchal.

The next morning when I was about to get into my running gear, I wondered if I should cover up more of my body. It was the month of May and the cruel Delhi summer was setting in. I looked at my running gear and I asked myself:

> *Should I wear this?*
> *Is it too skimpy?*
> *Will people stare?*

This self-scrutiny was a direct result of my experience of slur and humiliation. I understood this and I decided to wear what I wanted to: I put on the same running gear as the previous day. I am aware of the privilege of a male body that allows me to make this decision. It would be far more risky, with

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imminent threat of physical violence, for women runners to wear what I wear in a public park in Delhi.

Reflecting on my experiences of running in Haus Khas Park is an example of how self-narrative can demonstrate the invisibility of "other" Dalits in the law. It underlines the significance of tracing this invisibility for understanding the law more broadly. Equally, this personal narrative shows the need for remedial action against violence and discrimination based on SOGIE.

Now, let us consider a personal narrative of a disabled ST trans man to further trace some of the outlines of invisibility and to illustrate the intersection of disability, ethnicity, caste, and SOGIE in the law.

THROUGH A PERSONAL NARRATIVE: SO MANY IDENTITIES BUT THE GOVERNMENT WANTS JUST ONE

Kiran is a disabled trans man. He says, "I was born female and I was disabled so my family thought, 'What is the point of educating a disabled girl?'" Born in a "subordinate caste," Lambani, Kiran fell in love with a "dominant caste" woman, and they decided to live together. "Radhika's family was upset because they thought I was a girl and how could two girls be married and live together?" Kiran explains. Radhika's family considered Kiran someone with whom they wouldn't even drink water. "How could you have a relationship with someone like that?" they said.

Because of this hostility in their hometown in Andhra Pradesh, Radhika and Kiran moved to the neighboring state of Karnataka. Their problems did not end. Kiran could not avail "reservations" because Lambani is categorized differently in the two states: as ST in Andhra Pradesh and as SC in Karnataka. Sometimes these categories are registered differently in different states, as in Kiran's case; and because of this difference, Kiran lost his legal status of ST in Karnataka. On the other hand, Kiran could not avail of the SC status because he did not have the corresponding SC legal certification. Even if he had had this certification, Kiran could not have availed of "reservations" in Karnataka because SC status is often state specific and it applies only within that state.

Aside from falling between the cracks of legal categories, Kiran is now the subject of another legal category, called the "Backward Class" (BC). In April 2014, the Supreme Court granted legal recognition and protection to transgender persons as BC (*NLSA*). The legal category of BC is based on social and educational "backwardness," and it is different from both SC and ST.

These multiple legal categories now make Kiran SC, ST, BC, transgender, and disabled, but in different legal registers. Kiran continues to jostle with overlapping forms of discrimination in a legal administration that is fraught with ambiguities. "I have so many identities but the government wants just

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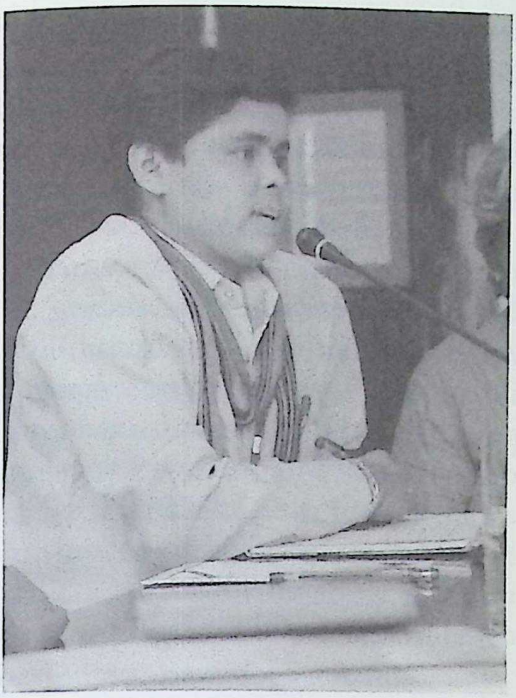

Figure 2. Kiran Nayak at the Roundtable "Law at the Intersection of Caste, Gender, and Sexuality" held on August 6, 2014. Reproduced courtesy of Tathagata Mandal. Used by permission.

case," he says. To secure his disability pension, Kiran had to show several certificates related to his gender, disability, and caste. "The government is very confused about what pension to give me. It took six months to negotiate [with the government] and get my due."

This conflation of legal categories is not unique to Kiran. There are more than one hundred thousand SC and ST transgender persons who are apparently invisible to the law. As noted, transgender persons in India were counted for the first time in the 2011 census. The census had a category "other" than male and female. In principle, this category could have included all those who are "other" than male or female, including indigenous gender transgressive persons like hijra, *kinnar*, *kothi*, *aravani*, *jogappas*, and *jogtis*. The census found that there are almost half a million of this "other" population; of these, more than 16 percent (78,811) are SC and about 7 percent (33,293) are ST. In other words, almost one quarter (23 percent) of this "other" category are SC and ST.

While we consider these numbers, it is important to note the strong likelihood of undercounting of this "other" category. This new category had to be explained to the surveyors and the surveyed at various stages of data collection. There is anecdotal information about the failure of the surveyors to understand this new category and a resulting failure to collect the full data. Scholar and transgender activist Reshma Prasad reflected on the misconceptions associated with the word transgender and the popular understanding of it. In 2014, Prasad narrates her life thus:

> Indian transgender, especially transgender women, are associated with the hijra identity, although the transgender community includes everyone. When I step out, most people think of only one thing—that I am a hijra, ignoring that I am an activist and I work for the community. They think that I beg for alms.

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It is true that the word transgender is commonly understood as hijra, and is likely to have prevailed during the census, too. In addition to this common misunderstanding, there is little or no understanding about trans men. This lack of understanding implies a virtual invisibility of female-to-male trans men in the census.

Yet, 112,104 is the official census figure for the "other" category, which means that this category is numerically visible. In spite of this numerical visibility, there is no understanding of "other" SC and ST persons in the law. An example of this legal invisibility shows in the Supreme Court judgment in *National Legal Services Authority (NLSA) v. Union of India* in 2014. While granting legal protection to transgender persons as BC, the Supreme Court did not clarify the resulting legal status of SC/ST transgender persons. Do they constitute an additional legal category of BC? The Government of India has petitioned the Supreme Court to clarify this (Anand). Thus, the composite character of Kiran's gender expression and ethnicity, as noted above, is rendered invisible, and for legal purposes, he becomes a non-ST disabled person.

II. PERSONAL NARRATIVES, EXPERIENCES, AND SITUATED KNOWLEDGES IN THE LAW AND LEGAL THEORY

How do personal narratives and experiences, as above, inform the law, legal scholarship, and theory? Contemporary legal theory in India is informed mostly by Western theorists and philosophers. H. L. A. Hart, Lon Fuller, John Rawls, and Ronald Dworkin are the core readings in jurisprudence that are applied mostly to the subject areas of Constitutional Law and Criminal Law. Some theorists in India have read these theorists and combined their ideas with a reading of ancient Hindu scriptures like Vedas, Shastras, and Smritis (Singh). Other theorists have devoted their efforts to proving and disproving the works of Western legal theorists, though they remain silent on the question of caste.

In an important work of legal scholarship, Kalpana Kannabiran presents an understanding of "Intersectional Jurisprudence" and offers a critical engagement with the law in the context of the routine perpetration of atrocities on entire communities. Kannabiran foregrounds colonization as the dominant form of historic oppression, while making no reference to other forms of oppression, such as patriarchy and casteism, that operate along with colonialism. However, these intersecting forms of oppression would be relevant to a foundational understanding of intersectional jurisprudence. With this partial understanding of oppression, Kannabiran then makes a cursory commentary about Ambedkar's contributions and the specific context of caste, but overlooks the existing understanding of discrimination in India. Most important,

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the author does not offer any explanation of the text of Article 15 (1) of the Constitution that ought to include intersectional grounds of discrimination (Argyle). A fundamental lapse in Kannabiran's articulation of intersectional jurisprudence is that she explores her argument with reference to distinct groups: persons with disabilities, Dalits, Adivasis, religious minorities, women, and sexual minorities, in that order. Kannabiran does not consider intersectional groups like "other" Dalits.

Another leading scholar, Upendra Baxi, situates Ronald Dworkin in contemporary Indian jurisprudence and offers a critique of Dworkin's legal theory and its application to the law in India (Baxi).[3] Baxi refers to the works of postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to challenge Dworkin and promptly distances himself from Spivak, leaving some ambiguity about his own position.[4] Baxi unquestioningly defers to the makers of the Constitution of India, namely their effort to prohibit "untouchability" (via Article 17), as well as the legislative defense against the judicial unconstitutionality of reservations. He extols the Indian judiciary without interrogating the dominant-caste composition and subjectivities of the judges. Baxi does not make any reading of Dalits' experiences or of the value of personal experiences to theory and knowledge production. Although Baxi acknowledges that it was the subordination of colonization that fueled the freedom struggle in India, which in turn became the guiding spirit for the Constitution, he does not make any sense of the casteism that was, at the least, parallel to colonialism.

Contemporary legal theory has not sufficiently attended to the relationship between caste and the law in India. In contrast, the social sciences have an extensive body of literature on caste. Well-known social-science scholars have "positioned" their work from Dalit perspectives (to name just a few: Gopal Guru, Kancha Ilaiah, and Anand Teltumbde). And yet there is an intriguing silence about caste in contemporary legal scholarship; there are no legal scholars who "position" themselves as Dalit in their writings. This part of the essay thus develops a combined understanding of positionality, situated knowledges, experience, personal narratives, and their potential relevance to contemporary legal theory and scholarship.

What could be the significance, if any, of Dalit positioning in legal scholarship? Given the universalist nature of the law, in the sense that it applies universally to all its subjects, there is a seeming objectivity in the functions of legislature, judiciary, police, and other law-enforcement agencies. Those at the top of power hierarchies assume a standard of objectivity and deliver a universalist character of the law. These agencies of the law are invisible and unmarked in their empowered positions of dominant caste, class, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, and other power systems. The body of legal

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knowledge emerges from these empowered positions that remain unmarked. According to Donna Haraway, "Knowledge from the point of view of the unmarked is truly fantastic, distorted, and irrational" (587). This is a starting point for "situated knowledges" and "standpoint epistemology" in feminist scholarship. An assumed objectivity and a resulting claim to universality—of those at the top—pose a problem to the subjugated and marginalized lives of Dalits and other subordinate groups. Positioning is thus crucial to "situated knowledges" and to generating stronger standards for the "objectivity" of the law.

However, vantage points and positioning of Dalits are not conclusively authoritative and impossible to challenge. Haraway clarifies, "The positionings of the subjugated are not exempt from critical reexamination, decoding, deconstruction, and interpretation; that is, from both semiological and hermeneutic modes of critical inquiry" (584). Thus, the view from a body is distinguished from the view from above. Haraway argues "for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims" (588). Often, the law projects this view from above; in contrast, Dalit location, positioning, and situating are views from below, from a body that could make rational knowledge claims to this authority and implementation of the law from above.

In addition to their location from below, vantage points of the subjugated are correlated with communities. As Haraway argues, "Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals" (590). It would stand to reason that subjugation and subordination along the lines of race, caste, ethnicity, and gender are group inequalities that are communities' collective experiences. This correlation of situated knowledges and communities would apply very differently to subjugation and subordination that is experienced through, and partially because of, isolation. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) narratives often testify to prolonged experiences of isolation in which individuals might feel they are alone and there is nobody else like them. Their situated knowledges would necessarily start from the subject position of isolation that might later acquire the character of shared community experiences. Further, located within experiences of "intersectional subordination," individuals could have conflicted memberships in two or more communities. For example, I could experience rejection by Dalit communities because of my queerness, and I could experience rejection by queer communities because of my Dalitness. In this "intersectional subordination" my subject position would start essentially from my situation as an isolated individual who might connect with subject positions

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of other Dalits and queers over time. Even if that were not to happen, I remain an individual subject of the law in the sense that the law applies to me individually and to the groups of which I am part. Therefore the correlation of situated knowledges and communities needs to be reviewed in relation to isolated individuals, nascent communities, and "intersectional subordination."

In other parts of the world, and within legal scholarship, critical race theory has looked to the "bottom" for substantive outcome, authenticity, credibility, and voice. Proponents of authenticity have argued that voices at the "bottom" present an authentic, albeit diverse, voice. Looking to the "bottom" is an effective way to capture the narratives of people of color, providing them with meaningful opportunities to be heard. Critical race theorists like Mari Matsuda, Patricia Williams, and Robert Chang have expounded and relied upon the use of "personal narratives" in their works. Notwithstanding this extensive deployment of "personal narrative," there is an insufficient theorizing within critical race theory about the so-called "bottom" (Carbado 1312). With an insufficient yet useful theorizing in legal scholarship, I look toward understanding the law and its relationship with caste in India.

The disciplines of philosophy and sociology have expounded on the ethics of theorization (Guru and Sarukkai). In making this leap across disciplines and geography, I correlate the use of "personal narrative" in critical race theory in the US and the use of "experience" in Dalit theorizing in India. Dalit scholar Gopal Guru starts with an understanding that the existing treatment of theoretical concepts is discursive, and that experience can dispute this treatment. According to Guru, "reference to experience is important for disputing efforts that seek to assign discursive treatment to theoretical concepts" (Guru and Sarukkai 115). The philosophical foundations of emancipatory movements are lacking the experiences of victimhood, and this experience of victimhood provides the necessary vocabulary for a philosophical understanding. Guru makes a case for understanding the external world by starting with one's own experience. He underscores the narrativization of humiliation and degradation with the hope that this might invoke the sympathetic understanding of those who inflict these humiliations and degradation:

> For understanding the external world, one has to start from one's own experience. The connection between the abstract and the immediate takes place primarily through theoretical mediation between the particular and the universal. The description of a particular experience in the form of an autobiographical account may not be sufficient condition to radically connect the particular to the universal . . . while autobiography is important to open up dialogue with those who are not part of the experience, they can merely share that experience through sympathy with the

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> authors. This is sufficient. Moreover, humiliating, degrading experience narrativized through autobiographies might prompt some to notice the details of the painful experience and develop the moral stamina not to repeat the act that would produce such a morally objectionable experience for others. (Guru and Sarukkai 119)

Elsewhere, Guru places moral responsibility upon those who are the recipients of torment to vocalize their experience of past silence. In conceiving of this moral responsibility, Guru formulates a binary of the "recipients of torment" and the "tormentor," and an implicit homogeneity of Dalit experiences that places moral responsibility upon the "recipients of torment" to vocalize the experience of past silence (Guru and Sarukkai 117–19). Although this binary supports the use of experience and personal narratives in this essay, I would distance myself from any "moral responsibility." Rather than my responsibility, moral or otherwise, it is a collective responsibility of everybody to vocalize and amplify the experiences of being silenced.

Rethinking standpoint epistemology and elaborating new subjects of knowledge, Sandra Harding states:

> Such a project requires learning to listen attentively to marginalized people; it requires educating oneself about their histories, achievements, preferred social relations, hopes for the future; it requires putting one's body on the line for "their" causes until they feel like "our" causes. (458)

This call to action presumes a neat distinction between marginalized people and those who create knowledge. The distinction fades when marginalized people create knowledge about themselves. Even if the distinction were neat, clear, and true, what would it mean to put "one's body on the line for 'their' causes until they feel like 'our' causes"? How adept could anyone be to "feel" anyone else's cause? My limited experience of deploying Dalit positioning has evoked intense anxiety, anguish, grief, and anger within me. Occasionally I have found myself at loggerheads with some of my friends and former colleagues. There have been times when I have confronted senior and more accomplished people who could jeopardize my career prospects. Recollection of personal memories of humiliation and a pursuit of confrontations has yielded some of the content of my narratives—at the cost of my psychological well-being. In the process of developing these narratives, I started getting bizarre nightmares that became routine: I would be placed on a guillotine, sometimes consensually, and I would watch my beheading with indifference. This was deeply disturbing and mystifying because I have never seen a guillotine in real life or witnessed anyone's beheading, much less my own. I would wake up disturbed and disoriented. These subconscious feelings of fear, despair, and anxiety began to creep into my consciousness, and I started getting uncanny

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thoughts of killing myself. For no reason, I would think of throwing myself in front of running trains in subway stations. Around this time, there was also the disturbing news about Dalit research scholar Rohith Vemula's suicide by hanging. My eerie thoughts of killing myself now started to include death by hanging. I recovered from this turmoil through a combination of coping mechanisms, including regular running and meditation, personal resilience and will, but the intensity of this protracted experience took me to dark spaces within that were previously unknown to me. All this gave me a sense of what it might mean to put "one's body on the line for 'their' causes until they feel like 'our' causes." Only that in my case there is a thin line between "their" and "our." My self-identification as Dalit is a conscious subject positioning and vantage point through which I have developed this essay.

A word of caution: the use of personal narrative as a heuristic tool should be done with a preparedness to undergo intense anxiety, anguish, grief, and anger, especially when these narratives uncover personal experiences of humiliation and subordination. *The Essential Writings of B. R. Ambedkar*, edited by Valerian Rodrigues, presents commentary about Ambedkar's writings on "untouchability" and the intimacy, grief, and anger in those writings. According to Rodrigues:

> Ambedkar's engagement as a researcher, an intellectual and activist, is much more nuanced, hesitant but intimate as compared to his viewpoint on caste, where he is prepared to offer stronger judgements and proffer solutions. However with untouchability, there is often a failure of words. *Grief is merged with anger.* (27, emphasis mine)

As researchers and writers, we should be aware of the possibility of experiencing grief and anger when we revisit personal memories of humiliation, subordination, and discrimination—especially when our research requires us to break the silence by confronting our systemic oppressors.

At times, my deployment of personal experience, borrowing from Joan W. Scott's words, becomes "evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world. . . . We know that they exist, but not how they have been constructed" (25). Readers may note that my focus is more on the law and less on difference and identity formation. Questions about identity formation are there in my experiences for anyone to analyze, critique, disagree with, or debunk. My experiences are not so much about how difference is established; they are more about tracing the invisibility of "other" Dalits and breaking the silence about them in the law. Even just a partial visibility exposes some of the inadequacies and failures of

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the law in one part, and in another part, it exposes the existence of repressive laws. That is the limited purpose of my deployment of experience and personal narrative in this essay: to start a critical conversation about the law, legal scholarship, and theory.

Borrowing again from Scott's words, "Making visible the experience of a different group exposes the existence of repressive mechanisms, but not their inner workings or logics; we know that difference exists, but we don't understand it as constituted rationally" (25). Some of my experiences and analyses attempt that exploration in the realm of law. In part, the law animates and enacts some of the repressive mechanisms. How and in what ways does the law constitute subjects who see and act in the world? At this stage of my writing and in this essay, I do not answer this question to any satisfaction. It is the start of an understanding, not a conclusive end.

III. BREAKING THE SILENCE

After tracing the invisibility of "other" Dalits in the law in the first part of this essay, and considering the theoretical understanding of situated knowledges, standpoint epistemology, and personal narrative and experience in the second part, I break the silence about "other" Dalits in a composite area of the law and social movements. I end now in the way I began—with a personal narrative.

As part of a civil society coalition that pursued an "intersectional approach" in its demand for decriminalization of sodomy in India, I led a campaign for the ongoing litigation in the Delhi High Court. This effort achieved some success in the judicial ruling of *Naz Foundation v. Government of NCT Delhi*, but the success was narrow and short lived. It was narrow because the resulting decriminalization was only for sexual acts "in private," ignoring the realities of working-class, Dalit, and Adivasi queer persons, many of whom did not have the privileges of private spaces. Indeed, many of the arrests under the law originated from public spaces. Despite awareness about this on-the-ground reality within social movements and campaigns, the legal demand for decriminalization was limited to private spaces. The Delhi High Court ruling of 2009 conceded this demand. It was short lived because the Supreme Court of India overturned the High Court ruling in 2013.

In 2014, a roundtable seminar titled "Law at the Intersection of Caste, Gender and Sexuality" discussed this wrinkle in the decriminalization campaign regarding public and private spaces. The roundtable also raised pertinent questions about my silence and inaction at the time of the campaign. While I was open about my Dalit and gay status within this campaign, my understanding of an "intersectional approach" in our demand for decriminalization

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was limited to multiple identity formations, devoid of any understanding of how intersectional identity formations played out in our demands for law reform. Later, and in response to questions posed in the roundtable, I reflected on the formal and informal mechanisms that produce silence and invisibility. Groups knowingly or unknowingly, dominant cultures within social movements can be sometimes hostile toward and alienating of subordinate groups like Dalits. I use the following narrative as an anecdotal example of the dominant class and caste composition of social movements that exclude and silence the working classes and Dalit groups, resulting in invisibility.

The following happened to come to my attention by chance. It is neither typical nor definitive of "other" Dalit experiences. I was browsing my Facebook newsfeed and I stopped at the sight of my grandfather's name. Someone had posted a business card with the name Phool Singh, and this card said: "please contact for gardening work." The person who posted this photo was formerly part of the civil society coalition that had demanded decriminalization of sodomy on "intersectional" grounds.

Phool translates as flower, and so my Facebook friend had captioned her post as: *Jaisa naam waisa kaam* (a name that matches one's occupation). Make no mistake, my friend was not endorsing the services of Phool Singh. She was mocking both his name, Phool, and his occupation, gardening.

This mockery continued in the comments section. The first comment mocked the mailing address that had the word palace in it. This was making fun of the menial occupation of gardening and the contrasting regalia of palaces. Someone else said, "going by this formula, what should our names be?" My friend replied, "*Sevika*??? [female servant] <vomit>." My friend was disgusted with the word servant in the description of her white-collar work. Someone else pointed to the phonetic similarity between Phool and fool.

There were no comments about this being a real business card, and that Phool Singh was a real person—who was trying to make a humble living. Although my father's father was not a gardener, I still found this post and its surrounding conversation especially poignant. My grandfather Phool Singh had a small business of selling *baans* and *balli* wood. On my mother's side, her father was a gardener, yes, and his name was Lal Chand.

At the time of Lal Chand's birth around 1929, in the distant peripheries of Lutyens's Delhi, there was a consciousness in naming. Dignified names were reserved for persons of "higher" stature and caste, and such names were denied to persons of "lower" stature and caste. Even today, certain names are set apart for people who are born *savarnas* ("dominant caste" Hindus) and denied to those who are born *avarnas* ("untouchable" Dalit). Lal Chand was Dalit and his name had to be commonplace, modest, and nothing grand. He was called

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Lala and this is not the kind of *lala* that we know in a colloquial sense, typically a rotund merchant or moneylender. *Lal* is a term of endearment for male children and perhaps Lala was a derivative of that, a childhood pet name that stuck for life.

There is also something distinctive about surnames. The practice of using surnames came to India with British colonization. These surnames were crafted from a combination of a person's community, place of origin, and occupation, and all of this had caste underpinnings. Caste had anyhow played a decisive role in the allocation of occupations. The practice of surnames provided easy and open means of caste identification, especially in cosmopolitan urban locations, where caste was becoming relatively obscure. These surnames have remained proud declarations of family lineage and occupation, except in the cases of Dalits who are compelled to carry lineages of poverty, deprivation, and shame.

As a Dalit who was unable to complete his primary education, Lala had very few options for work. Lala's father sat him down to serve at a *piau* (drinking water facility) at the age of twelve. Around this time, he was married to a five-year-old girl Kela (this name Kela translates as banana). At some point, Lala stopped serving at the *piau* and was assigned the work of a gardener. Lala took care of gardens in Lutyens's Delhi,[5] and subsequently gained formal employment in the Government Department of Horticulture. He also moonlighted as a gardener in private residential houses of another locality called Jangpura in Delhi.

Back to my friend and her Facebook post. She was mocking a genuine business card, and this mockery dismissed the personhood of Phool Singh and attacked his human dignity. This kind of ridicule is common in dominant cultures that mock certain occupations and names. I added my comment and said that "the caste system doesn't allow people to choose their occupations and names, and do you think that's funny?" I was confronting my friend and all the others who were mocking this Phool Singh.

My friend did not answer me but she deleted her post almost immediately. Her deletion did not undo the personal offense that was caused to me. It reminded me of the times when, knowingly or unknowingly, my peers would mock me, my caste, my ancestors, and I would have to keep quiet. My silence was complicit in my shaming.

Now I break the silence. I talk back.

Lala's firstborn child, my mother, was named Vidyavati, a name that translates as "bearer of knowledge." Vidyavati was born in the same month as the Constitution of India, in January 1950. True to her name and true to the constitutional aspirations of equality, perhaps, Vidyavati became the first

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woman in her family to complete higher secondary school, and she became the first person in her family to get a white-collar job. With a name that matches her occupation indeed, Vidyavati taught for forty years in the primary schools of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. And I am proud to be this Vidyavati's child.

Sometimes my dominant-caste and class-activist colleagues cannot understand what keeps Dalit groups away from the "intersectional" civil society groups. It is presumed but rarely said out loud that Dalit groups are ignorant, uneducated, and less sophisticated than more elite women and LGBTIQ groups. This dominant caste and class subjectivity of the social movements needs to be understood, because this subjectivity renders some of the social movements inhospitable, unwelcoming, domineering, and non-intersectional. This dominant class and caste subjectivity is counterproductive to the supposed "intersectional approach," and it alienates subordinate groups like Dalits.

CONCLUSION

My personal narratives in this essay have shown the need for developing legal scholarship on caste and a need for legal theory in the composite areas of caste and its intersections with SOGIE. This essay has elevated SOGIE issues in the context of caste, and it has interrogated caste in the growing discourse around SOGIE politics and equality. The knowledge that comes from examining overlapping vulnerabilities would help strengthen tools, instruments, and rhetoric designed to address violence, discrimination, and social disempowerment globally. More particularly, given the background from which this essay has emerged, the ongoing campaign for decriminalization of sodomy in India and the upcoming "curative petition" in the Supreme Court could be informed by an "intersectional" understanding of caste and SOGIE presented in this essay. Only a part of the law, as it comes into being, is formulated within legislatures, executives, and judiciaries. There is a part of the law that originates in the very demands for law reform from social movements. Decriminalization of sodomy is one such demand that is currently being formulated within social movements in India. There needs to be a greater self-awareness and anticaste consciousness within these movements for them to reimagine and formulate the demands from an understanding of "intersectionality." Only in the narrowest sense is the decriminalization about "privacy"; in a wider and more intersectional sense, the demand for decriminalization is about equality and human dignity. Histories of discrimination, oppression, and indignities originating in the caste system in India could be pivotal to informing the broader agenda of liberation and human rights for all.

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The seemingly contradictory and puzzling outcome of the judicial process in *Koushal* and *NLSA* could be considered an inadvertent folly of a judiciary that is anyway subject to an impending "curative" process. At the same time, it would be a folly to consider this judicial outcome a folly. There could be some rationale to the outcome that might be obscure. Even a cursory reading of the comparative advancement of transgender rights—over sexual orientation—in the neighboring jurisdictions of Pakistan and Nepal would reveal a pattern that is worthy of mentioning. In *Pant v. Nepal,* the Supreme Court of Nepal issued a decision in recognition of "third gender" in 2007 (Bochenek and Knight) and in 2009, the Supreme Court of Pakistan recognized the rights of "eunuchs" to inherit property, vote, and receive education, among other things (*Khaki v. Rawalpindi*). It cannot be inadvertent that multiple jurisdictions in South Asia have yielded a greater advancement of transgender rights over sexual orientation. Another example of this advancement can be seen in the legislative process in India that accepted the Transgender Bill in the Upper House of the Parliament, while rejecting an initiative for the decriminalization of sodomy proposed by Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor (Express News Service). There needs to be a separate and combined understanding of the two axes of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) that is otherwise lumped into one category. SOGI is an "intersection" of two different categories; and these two categories can yield contradictory outcomes. The legal process is rendered less puzzling with an "intersectional" understanding of SOGI.

Further, SOGI and its intersections with other axes, such as caste and ethnicity, contains unexplored opportunities for understanding some of the analogous grounds. The passing analogies between transgender status and "untouchability" in *NLSA*, and similar passing analogies between British colonial criminalization of sodomy and the former "criminal tribes" in *Naz*, are helpful for understanding the legal and judicial processes at hand. It almost seems like the judges are nudging lawyers and social movements to present their arguments based on analogous grounds: caste, tribal status, and SOGI. And if so, "other" Dalits are suitable candidates for examining these analogous grounds. Embodied experiences of SOGI and its intersection with caste would shed more light on a subject that is otherwise rendered obscure in a seemingly contradictory legal moment. The challenge is to trace the invisibility and break the silence about "other" Dalits with greater force—including through the deployment of personal narratives and experience.

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NOTES

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1. Dalit translates into English as broken, downtrodden, or crushed. It is a figurative usage that calls out centuries of subordination based on caste. Dalits are considered polluted and unclean, and deemed "untouchable" in the caste system. Some of these practices of untouchability and discrimination flourish to date. Cleaning tasks are typically assigned to Dalits. "Manual scavenging" is a euphemism for cleaning sewers and latrines by hand. Residential areas in rural India remain segregated along caste lines. Although urban India allows some anonymity of caste, dominant caste identities are only too apparent in caste-oriented surnames, like Sharma, Menon, Iyer, Gupta, and Kapur. These are just a few examples of caste-oriented surnames, not an exhaustive list. Dalit status is implied or presumed in lesser-known obscure surnames—or no surnames at all.

2. At the same time, not all SCs self-identify as Dalit because the literal meaning of the word Dalit (as "downtrodden") is considered demeaning and derogatory by some persons who might prefer to self-identity as SC or their specific caste categories and names. I have written about this elsewhere, in an opinion piece entitled "I Am Dalit, Not SC."

3. The following critiques are illustrative of several others that Baxi raises: Dworkin does not have an explicit theory of state (Baxi 562–63); there is an insufficient conception of democracy and the "normless ways in which minuscule citizens somehow become apex justices" (Baxi 565); Dworkin's corpus gives insufficient attention to "global economic constitutionalism" (567–69); it appears resolute in non-post-modernism (569–70); it is silent about "the conceptual distinction (or indistinction) between 'interpretation' and 'amendment' [of the constitution]" (578); and it is insufficient in its understanding of the "constitutional" and "social pasts" as it might apply to the "subaltern" and "the right-less people" (578–81).

4. Spivak "insists that the 'regulative political concepts' of the actually existing postcolonial constitutions are symptomatic of 'catachreses,' that is, 'concept-metaphors without an adequate historic referent' outside the 'supposedly authoritative narrative . . . in the social formations of Western Europe'" (Baxi 575). According to Baxi, "besides overlooking histories of the Indian struggle for independence and conceptions of equal concern, justice, and political decency," Spivak's general description of postcolonial constitutionalism as catachresis "also fails to note the ways in which justices need to enunciate 'preconditions of legitimate democracy'" (581).

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5. Lutyens's Delhi is a lasting colonial legacy that marks the grandeur of the capital city of British India, with distinct architectural buildings, mansions, and sprawling gardens. My grandfather was placed in this colonial site and ironically it was in this heart of colonialism that he imbibed progressive values that allowed his daughter (who was to later become my mother) access to education.

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STORIES OF DALIT DIASPORA
MIGRATION, LIFE NARRATIVES, AND CASTE IN THE US

SHWETA MAJUMDAR ADUR AND ANJANA NARAYAN

INTRODUCTION

Nayyirah Waheed's poignant and visceral words "you broke the ocean in / half to be here. / only to meet nothing that wants you. —immigrant" (4) animate the lived realities of countless nameless and faceless immigrants whose struggles to exist and belong cross time and space. Every day and in myriad ways the diaspora has survived and performed the pain of leaving; some find home in their destinations while others endure the trauma of remaining perpetual foreigners; their narratives are rarely recorded and, when recited, easily overlooked. Yet they persevere and rise to tell their stories because stories, as Thenmozhi Soundararajan has reiterated, are "the most important unit of social change" especially for groups whose lives have appeared dispensable and less worthy of documenting ("Thenmozhi Soundararajan").

This paper focuses on the *story* of a similar group of immigrants—the Dalit diaspora in the US told through the narratives of three Dalit activists.[1] S. Kumar and B. Singh (names altered) are first-generation male immigrants while Thenmozhi Soundararajan is a second-generation woman and well-known Dalit feminist activist. The life narratives of these three people reveal experiences of Dalit migrants in the US who comprise the "new" stream out of India.[2]

Dalits' lives are rarely at the center of discussions of South Asian diaspora, and the dearth of scholarship on Dalit lives and activism in the US is a testament to that marginalization. As we demonstrate in this paper, this struggle to belong is multifaceted; as double minorities, their bid to assimilate is thwarted not only by racism in the mainstream US but also by casteism within their own ethnic communities. As a "diaspora within a diaspora," their alliances are multilayered and more nuanced than those of their "upper caste

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ethnics whose voices are reified and lives mirrored in the ethnic culture they construct to recreate a "home away from home." By centering Dalit lives in the diaspora we specifically fill two crucial gaps in 1) South Asian American scholarship and 2) mainstream diaspora studies.

While prominent South Asian American scholars such as Bandana Purkayastha, Khyati Y. Joshi, Monisha Das Gupta, and Pawan Dhingra have produced prolific scholarship on questions of race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and intergenerational dynamics there is little that investigates the role of caste in diaspora even though caste has been a central unit of analysis in Indian scholarship due to the ubiquitous role caste politics have played in shaping the social dynamics of the subcontinent. Even when scholars like Namita Manohar and Anjali Gera Roy have studied the impact of caste in the US, they have typically focused on twice-born castes, such as the Patels and the Jains. Further, our study also contributes to an emerging branch of scholarship in diaspora studies. In earlier scholarship, "diaspora" has been treated as a homogenous whole, and studies have overwhelmingly documented negotiations with the host society. More recently, scholarship has been sensitive to the internal dynamics of belonging (for example, in *Unruly Immigrants*, Das Gupta examines the role of class, gender, and sexuality to the internal dynamics of belonging within the South Asian American diaspora).[3] Our paper builds on that branch by examining Dalits, who demonstrate a significant axis of marginalization within the Indian immigrant community in the US.

This paper is divided into three sections: section one provides a brief assessment of existing literature on diaspora and describes gaps in the study of diasporic lives; section two establishes the importance and contribution of life narratives in studying diasporic life; and section three focuses on describing the making of a Dalit diaspora and Dalit experiences and activism. In this final section we discuss the structural underpinnings of Dalit migration to the US, the multilayered negotiations with the broader ethnic community, and finally the activism that pushes back against marginalization. We conclude this paper with some observations about possible future directions in the study of Dalit lives in the US.

I. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DIASPORA

For this essay, we primarily engage with the field of diaspora studies as an epistemological and empirical framework to understand better the Dalit diaspora in the US. The interdisciplinary work in diaspora studies that Homi K. Bhabha, Robin Cohen, James Clifford, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Khachig Tölölyan, and Steven Vertovec have produced provides important insights to explore the complex and multilayered identities of contemporary migrants

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whose lives span national boundaries. The term diaspora is derived from the Greek word *diaspeirein*, which means dispersion. While the historic conceptualization of diaspora that Stéphane Dufoix, Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, and Robin Cohen utilize speaks to the phenomenon of scattering of people like that of exiled Jews, scholars like Steven Vertovec continue to contest the term by broadening definitions of diaspora.

Drawing on the exile and dispersion of Jews, Benedict Anderson, Robin Cohen, and William Safran have embedded classical definitions of diaspora within the framework of a strong collective identity with emphasis on roots and a deep connection to the ancestral homeland. As Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal highlights, "the dominant conceptualizations of diaspora presumptively accept the formation of tightly bounded communities and solidarities (on the basis of common cultural and ethnic references) between places of origin and arrival" (2). Rogers Brubaker identifies three core characteristics of diaspora: 1) geographical dispersion or scattering of people from a territory of origin to settlement in societies around the globe; 2) loyalty toward a real and imagined homeland and the idea of eventual return to the homeland; and 3) boundary maintenance, which means that diasporic groups resist total cultural assimilation and maintain a distinct identity which continues through successive generations (5–7). Similarly, Tölölyan argues that Jews form the archetypal diasporic group and the characteristics of a diaspora include "a culture and a collective identity that preserves elements of the homeland's language, or religious, social and cultural practice" (649). Finally, William Safran enumerates a series of qualities in his definition of the term diaspora in his seminal essay, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," where he describes groups who reside "outside the homeland" and "retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland" (83).

The second approach, named "the postmodern version of diaspora," challenges the centrality of the homeland in traditional definitions of diaspora (Anthias 560). According to Floya Anthias, the postmodern conceptualization of diaspora denotes "a condition rather than being descriptive of a group" (565). This version, upheld by scholars as diverse as Pnina Werbner, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, James Clifford, Avtar Brah, Homi Bhabha, and Gloria Anzaldúa suggests that fixed and static notions of identity have been replaced by hybrid, syncretic, and fluid identities. Emphasizing heterogeneity and diversity, Cohen states that contemporary diasporas "bridge the gap between the individual and society, between the local and the global," blurring boundaries and syncretizing cultures (196). The postmodern perspective views hybridity and Gilroy's conception of double consciousness as distinctive attributes of postmodern diasporic communities because their identities are multifaceted, occupying multiple cultural and geographic spaces that include the homeland and countries of settlement.

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The concept of transnationalism also addresses the growing debate among scholars about the relevance of essentialized notions of belonging. While Thomas Faist has argued about the distinction between transnationalism and diaspora, many migration scholars have used the terms interchangeably. Scholars like anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Stanton-Blanc, who discuss both diaspora and transnationalism in *Nations Unbound*, argue that globalization causes technological advancements, massively increasing cross-border communications and exchanges while reducing the emotional distance between homeland and diasporic communities in the host society. The focus of contemporary transnational and diasporic literature has shifted from minority groups within nation-states to the ethnicity of groups within a global arena. Scholars like Peggy Levitt and Rafael de la Dehesa have begun to document how increasing numbers of groups are constructing lives spanning home and host countries to analyze ways in which technology aids this process and to examine how multiple nations attempt to incorporate migrants simultaneously. These scholars argue that ethnic identities are developed not solely in response to the structure of the host country but also with reference to the home country.

While these recent discussions on diaspora and transnationalism deconstruct and problematize the notion of homeland, Tariq Jazeel registers an essential but frequently neglected focus in diaspora studies when he emphasizes "how the diaspora experiences are embedded in the complexities of class, race, gender, generation and other social divisions" (19). It is important to acknowledge that diasporic communities are not homogenous entities but are characterized by enormous social, economic, cultural, and political diversity. According to Brah, members of diasporas occupy "differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we.'" She explains, "A multi-axial performative conception of power highlights the ways in which a group constituted as 'minority' along one dimension of differentiation may be constructed as a 'majority' along another" (189). In other words, the diasporic space must be understood through different axes of differentiation in terms of class, gender, race, sexual orientation, generation, and religion. Accordingly, we draw upon this theorization of diaspora to understand the complex positionality of Dalits who form a minority within the Indian diasporic space in the US. What are the experiences of Dalits in the diaspora? How have Dalits in the diaspora emphasized continuing caste discrimination in contemporary times?

Critics have also argued that surprisingly little attention has been paid to the gendered nature of diasporic experiences. Anthias questions an exclusive focus of diaspora studies on essentialist and primordialist approaches and calls

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for a concept of diaspora that pays full attention to the significance of gender. The academic scholarship on women in ethnic groups, including Naila Kabeer's *The Power to Choose: Bangladeshi Women and Labor Market Decisions in London and Dhaka*, has demonstrated how women in minority groups become subject to new controls that are reflective of their positions as racially marginalized groups in the West. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, along with Valentine M. Moghadam, have also argued that marginalized groups try to construct "affirming" identities to disengage from the identities assigned to them by the mainstream. This scholarship has demonstrated that women frequently become the sign and the marker of political goals, cultural identity, and signifiers of the collectivity's honor. Representations of women assume political significance, and certain images of women define and demarcate ethnic identity. However, diasporic literature has, as of yet, used few of these insights to assess if gender is a key component and, if it is, in what ways.[4] Accordingly, this paper explores the ways in which Dalit women comprehend their situations of marginality in the diaspora.

Finally, critics like Faiza Hirji, Russell King, and Anastasia Christou also note that the classical understandings of diaspora that William Safran and Robin Cohen put forth are not well suited to analyzing the experiences of second- and third-generation immigrants. According to Hirji, post-immigrant generations relate differently to their origin than do the first generation—at the same time, they appear to understand "what it means to be inhabitants of diaspora" (1). That is, despite not having gone through the dislocation and trauma that earlier kin suffered, most second- and third-generation immigrants feel a "sense of difference and an uncertainty in terms of belonging, that does gives them a diasporic consciousness" (3). Bandana Purkayastha's *Negotiating Ethnicity* and Purkayastha's coauthored text with Anjana Narayan, *Living Our Religions*, indicate that this "sense of not belonging" in mainstream societies together with the increasing global interconnectedness may fortify their commitment to diaspora. Drawing on this literature, our study also analyzes the experiences of second-generation Dalits in the US diaspora to understand how children of migrants navigate the complex intersections of caste, generational, and diasporic identities.

II. LIFE NARRATIVES, MIGRATION, AND CASTE

This paper uses the methodological framework of narrative inquiry to study the Dalit diaspora in the US. While life narratives have earned prominence over the last several years as a powerful tool to document both Dalit oppression and agency, little attention has been paid to the analysis of Dalit narratives in the diaspora.[5] Using a narrative approach, we aim to unpack a diverse

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nuanced, and nuanced perspective of Dalit migrants. Although this study examines the experiences of Dalits within the US, we adopt a transnational perspective to examine how Dalits position themselves across historical, social, and cultural contexts. Specifically, the narrative approach draws attention to barriers and opportunities that Dalit groups encounter in the US and explores how they voice their expressions of home and belonging. Our intent is to demonstrate the value of narrative analysis to examine how caste, race, ethnicity, class, culture, and age intersect to shape the way Dalit migrants make meaning of their social positioning in the US.

Previously, migration studies as a discipline was largely dominated by positivist scientific methods that reduced the experiences of migrants to a series of abstract variables and a priori assumptions.[6] The "narrative turn" in social sciences began in the 1980s, which led to a shift from objective and formulaic methods in migration research to methodological approaches that capture how migrants make sense of their lived experiences. The interdisciplinary field of narrative inquiry has largely been influenced by social-constructionist and interpretive paradigms such as phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, and feminism. As discussed in Catherine Kohler Riessman's *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, narrative inquiry is an approach that pays attention to how people construct their understandings of social reality through the stories they tell about it.

The life narrative approach provides an excellent way to study contemporary migrants, as this method draws attention to lives that are woven through the histories, politics, and cultures of social location within transnational contexts. According to Ursula Apitzch and Irini Siouti, life narratives allow the recognition of a wide variety of spaces across countries of origin, settlement, and beyond, thereby offering an alternative way of looking at the migration process. They argue that it has proven particularly productive in overcoming the trap of "methodological nationalism" (576), which refers to the tendency to conceptualize social phenomena like migration around the boundaries of the nation-state.[7] Overall, narrative inquiry offers a unique methodological strategy to capture the growing complexity, heterogeneity, and dynamism of migration phenomena.

Within narrative research, the most widely adopted method of data collection consists of narrative biographical interviews, which are characterized by semistructured and in-depth conversations. These interviews allow for a more fluid interaction between the researcher and interviewees with the objective of gaining an empathetic understanding of their world. Life narrative interviews have also gained currency within migration research as a useful way of studying the transnational lives of migrants. For this project, we conducted two biographical life narrative interviews with Dalit leaders in the diaspora.

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We also distilled a life narrative of a third Dalit leader in the diaspora from published materials and digital platforms such as websites and blogs by and about her.[8] Researchers like Ken Plummer increasingly recognize blogs or online personal journals as a rich source of qualitative data. Rebecca O'Connell and Julia Brannen contend that virtual spaces are "widely prevalent forms of knowledge and identity construction, largely personally narrated, concerned with everyday lives and with wide socioeconomic, cross-gender and intergenerational reach" (2). As G. Thomas Couser has said, digital forms of communication have opened up new platforms and audiences for life writing. Couser argues that online blogs are not constrained by traditional gatekeepers of publishing and have had a "powerfully democratizing effect on life writing" (13). Furthermore, as Carmela Bosangit, Juline Dulnuan, and Miguela Mena have stated, the anonymity and lack of researcher influence make the virtual platform an ideal space for people to narrate their personal experiences, thoughts and opinions honestly and candidly. As Paul Longley Arthur claims, "whether they are perceived as exciting or threatening, these innovations open up opportunities for new biographical forms and understanding to emerge" (76). Overall, virtual platforms are altering how we view life narratives, making them a fluid and dynamic medium to capture the stories and lived experiences of people.[9]

Finally, we used brief stories reported in the news media as sources of data. Alexandra Georgakopalou argues that narrative inquiry has primarily focused on longer narratives such as biographical interviews and memoirs. She contends that researchers should consider small and fragmented stories such as those reported in online spaces and mainstream news platforms because they are part of what Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps call "living narratives." According to Ochs and Capps, though living narratives are seemingly diverse and disjointed, they are part of everyday storytelling, conversations and interactions, making them a rich source of data.

III. DALIT DIASPORA IN THE US

THE "NEW" DALIT DIASPORA: DALIT MIGRANTS IN THE US

In "Cataracts of Silence: Race on the Edge of Indian Thought," Vijay Prashad argues that "India's powerful independence movement (1885–1947) produced perhaps the world's most extensive system of affirmative action for oppressed peoples like the Dalits" (3). The mandated reservations in educational opportunities and jobs facilitated the emergence of an educated and upwardly mobile group of Dalits. Even though the sweeping changes and de

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...protections did not lead to the end of casteism, they equipped and em-...powered Dalits to organize against the caste system and fight for their rights. ...Around the same time as the Dalit movement was picking up pace in India, ...the US overturned its race-based immigration quotas through the Hart Cel-...ler Act of 1965. This comprehensive act, also known as the Immigration and ...Nationality Act of 1965, explicitly prohibited discrimination on the basis of ...race, sex, and national origin and reversed the earlier limits on migration from ...Asian countries. The act represented a turning point for Indian migration to ...the US. While on the one hand the US postwar economy and the govern-...ment's investment in expanding STEM-related fields created more opportu-...nities than the US-born labor force could fill, on the other hand India, with a ...globally competitive yet highly subsidized higher-education system, was pro-...ducing more high-skilled professionals than its own economy could viably ...absorb. Put together, the conditions coalesced to create a fortuitous pipeline ...responsible for the emigration of Indians to the US. For the educated Dalit ...elite, many of whom, according to Vivek Kumar, were "first generation liter-...ates and professionals," beneficiaries of the affirmative action policy, this also ...meant an opportunity of leaving behind the draconian caste system to live in ...a caste-free society (114). This dream was already discernible in Dalit leader ...B. R. Ambedkar's experience during his time as a student at Columbia Uni-...versity in New York City where he earned an MA in 1915 and a PhD in 1927. ...Famously, Ambedkar is said to have described his time in New York as his first ...experience of social equality ("Bhimrao Ambedkar"). The circumstances out-...lined marked the migration trajectories of a number of Dalit professionals in ...the US as well as the interviewees featured in this study. The following pages ...provide snapshots of the lives of the three interviewees, their migration histo-...ries to the US, and their occupations.

S. Kumar was born in a small town in North India, but with the aid of ...the new government programs and sheer determination he completed his MA ...from a prestigious university in Delhi before moving to an equally renowned ...school in the US to complete his PhD. At the time of the interview, he was ...employed as a faculty member in a US university. Yet his path to success was ...littered with painful reminders of an unequal birth and memories of being ...shunned by the twice-born Hindus, some of whom were figures of authority ...during his formative years. Speaking of one such incident, he describes the ...violence he endured at the hand of a teacher:

> When I was a student in India, higher-caste teachers used to put four pens [between my fingers] and squeeze my hand because my [hand]writing was good. I have gone through those kinds of experiences since my childhood, still I am standing and I am fighting for my community and I am doing my job.

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The memory he describes proves that the de jure goodwill toward inclusion did not always translate into equality in everyday life. The recollection demonstrates an "upper caste" teacher's prejudice toward a "low caste" student and his inability to accept that a Dalit boy could have good handwriting. The punitive measures, such as putting pens between his fingers and squeezing them to presumably alter the shape of his fingers and thereby his handwriting, prove that de facto discrimination and violence continued to mark the lives of Dalits.

B. Singh remembers similar experiences. He, too, was born in a small town in India where he encountered and overcame numerous adversities to find his way to the US in the 1970s. He would often be reminded not to aim high and to remember his place in life. He says:

> When I was young, each step [in] my life I was told who I was. My identity was defined by somebody else. I was told that "you are a low caste, you are chamar, you are dalit, you are achyut [untouchable] you are a scheduled caste." And I said . . . what is this . . . I am not an equal with anybody else? I used to fight in the high school. My mother used to tell me we are lower caste.

B. R. Ambedkar's life and visionary contribution empowered both men to persevere and move beyond the limitations imposed on them by a society entrenched in caste bigotry. Recounting the indelible impact of Ambedkar in his life, B. Singh says, "I read the biography of Dr. Ambedkar and his biography was remarkable and I was looking for a role model for myself, somebody whose achievements I could copy." Later, after completing his MBBS from a premier institution in India, B. Singh moved to the US for further specialization. At the time of the interview, he was practicing medicine in the US.

Thenmozhi Soundararajan is a prominent Dalit rights activist and a second-generation Dalit immigrant born of Dalit doctors who migrated to the US in the 1970s also from a small town, though in Tamil Nadu.[10] Though she found out her caste when she was in fifth grade, Soundararajan describes herself as "coming out" as Dalit only in college. "Coming out," a phrase typically used by queer communities, refers to making one's authentic self known to the world, embracing and declaring an aspect of one's identity that is otherwise shamed and shunned by mainstream society. "Coming out," then, becomes a political and subversive act of reclaiming the self in its entirety. Soundararajan has collaborated with All Indian Dalit Women's Rights Forum to raise awareness about caste-based sexual violence against Dalit women ("Dalit Diva").

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EVERYDAY LIVES IN THE US

Dalits like S. Kumar and B. Singh have faced comparatively fewer stringent social norms against upward mobility in the US. India's caste system is inconsequential to the American mainstream. Dalits are unidentifiable from the other Indians, as caste identifiers such as last names and traditional occupation mean little to other Americans. Thus, in the US, Dalits are perceived and racialized simply as Indians. Yet within the coethnic community, negotiations are multilayered and complex. Immigrant coethnic communities and cultures develop as responses to racism in the mainstream; what is advanced as "authentic" Indian culture within these spaces is shorn of heterogeneity and is coded instead to reflect the voice of the dominant majority—which, as South Asian American scholars like Vijay Prashad (*Karma*), Monisha Das Gupta, and Shweta Majumdar Adur and Bandana Purkayastha demonstrate, is distilled through a Hindu, first-generation "upper caste" male point of view. Consequently, the tone of the hegemonic Indian cultural discourse—for migrant and postmigrant generations—becomes, implicitly even if not always explicitly, casteist (in addition to being patriarchal and elitist). While casteism can indeed exist and flourish in secular contexts, the growing dominance of Hindutva among Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) imbues the construction of Indian culture in significant ways. Prema A. Kurien, Arvind Rajagopal, and Anjana Narayan and Bandana Purkayastha have documented the presence of numerous organizations in the US that actively assert a "Hindu identity" imagined through the uncritical glorification of an "ancient India" steeped in Brahmanical Hindu values, resulting in the consequent downplaying, if not the disavowal, of the evils of the caste system. In other instances, caste becomes routinized in everyday performances of ethnic belonging and identity. Thenmozhi Soundararajan argues,

> For second-generation NRIs, flashing caste becomes a part of their cultural street cred with other communities. Some do it intentionally to elevate their identity while others operate from a misunderstanding of their own roots and blindly accept the symbols of their culture. Punjabi rappers throw down lyrics about being proud Jats. Tam-Brahms show off their sacred thread, recreate Thiruvayur in Cleveland, and learn Bharatanatyam while using their powerful networks to connect and succeed in the diaspora. ("Black Indians")

Similarly, speaking of the enduring legacy of caste in the diaspora, S. Kumar confirms:

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> Here in North America we have people who don't practice caste system but there are some, but there are some people who still live in India though they live in America . . . they permanently live in India [in terms of mindset]. I hate to say they practice casteism or untouchability in North America.

These everyday experiences may vary from erasure, invisibility, or a lack of acknowledgment of the oppressive caste system, to outright experiences of caste discrimination centered on petty acts governed by the contingencies of purity and pollution. For example, as recently as 2015, the California State Board of Education sought to revise its curriculum for purposes of diversity to incorporate the history of South Asia. While the decision by the Board was an unprecedented move, it also laid bare the fractures within South Asian ethnic communities. The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) argued against the inclusion of casteism in the textbooks on the pretext that it was a negative portrayal of Hinduism and Hindu culture and would only fuel American stereotypes of Indians as being backward.[12] The desire to conceal centuries of repression and violence perpetrated against Dalits in the name of caste is tantamount to expunging the history of an entire community. HAF's move was rightfully met with vociferous protests by more progressive South Asian groups. In addition to demonstrating the friction within the community around questions of caste, this incident sheds light on the everyday lives of many in the diaspora. Consider, for example, S. Kumar's experience and his conversation with a second-generation Indian student:

> I gave her an assignment to find out about Dalit diaspora. After spending two weeks in the library she told me, "There is nothing on the Dalit diaspora, what can I do?" I said, "No, there is a lot of material and you have to find it." She came with the hypothesis that Dalits are not very professional or they don't represent professional backgrounds in North America. I asked why. She said, "*bechare woh to gareeb hai* [they are very poor]. After they come to North America they don't have money. They don't have power." And I said, "No, no, this is not true. There are Dalits who are professionals, who are engineers, doctors, you can find Dalits everywhere in every city." She said, "No, no, no, it's not true." When she insisted, I said, "There is one sitting in front of you." And she said, "*You*." . . . She burst into tears and said, "I can't imagine a Dalit can be a distinguished professor. This is a shock to me." I said, "This is not shocking and there are many people who have received education and are doing good jobs like others."

The student's misinformation about the absence of Dalits in the US or, specifically, her inability to conceive of the possibility that Dalits could occupy elite positions in the US demonstrates the stereotypes associated with Dalits and general lack of visibility of casteism in the US. Yet this lack of awareness among the second generation in part may also be indicative of the reluctance

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of some Dalit migrants who moved to the US to identify themselves as Dalits. To rid themselves of caste oppression, they may have intentionally distanced themselves from the institution by changing their names or passing as twice-born in the company of others. Alternatively viewed, this strategic move also results from the need to survive as a minority in an otherwise alien country wherein outing one's caste/Dalit identity impacts the level of support one receives from the coethnic community. Consider Thenmozhi Soundararajan's experience. In her blogs, she candidly remembers her parents' maneuverings around their Dalit identity and their desire to remain closeted for the fear of being ostracized by the Indian community. When she finally came out as a Dalit woman, she experienced the firsthand vitriol that her parents might have protected her from by simply "passing" as non-Dalits:

> Friends stopped talking to us. I had plates and utensils switched on me. I even received hate mail and death threats. . . . All of the Indian professors on campus were upper caste as well, and all, except one, refused to advise me on projects and blacklisted my work. I stopped getting invited to South Asian events. These are some of the structural manifestations of caste in the diaspora. ("What It Means")

Soundararajan's experience in the so-called liberal bastion of the academic ivory tower is not isolated. S. Kumar remembers a similar incident during his own doctoral studies:

> There was a professor when I was doing my PhD who came [to] realize that I come from [a] certain background . . . he told me clearly that I'll make sure that you don't go through. Luckily I was supported by my committee members and I got through and he was very disappointed.

Thus, in routine interpersonal negotiations silencing and disavowing caste become operative bases for survival for a significant portion of the diaspora in the US. For the hegemonic ethnic community (that mirrors the voices of the "upper caste"), concealing one's caste reveals a desire to be seen as less backward by the mainstream American society, and for many Dalits, like Soundararajan's parents, not revealing their caste identity offers a modicum of belonging to the hegemonic ethnic community in an otherwise alien country. Despite the pretenses of casting out caste, casteism insidiously shapes the workings of the ethnic community.

Perhaps nowhere are caste proscriptions more transparent than in intimate spaces. Consider matrimonial websites, which not only state caste preference but often break down into subcaste categories for closer matches. Commenting on the trend, S. Kumar says,

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> When you see matrimonials in the US seeking bride or groom, they say "caste no bar except from Dalits or untouchables." What does that mean? Do they mean that Dalits are not human beings?

Clearly, caste is an important consideration when contracting marriages, and violent reprisals have been known to follow infractions. In 2007, a man was arrested on charges of killing his pregnant daughter, his son-in-law, and his three-year-old grandson. He set their apartment on fire to punish the daughter for what he perceived to be a "cultural slight"; his daughter had married without his approval and to someone of a "lower caste" (Davey). While it is not known whether the daughter married a Dalit, the example shows how the caste system can survive migration.

DALIT ACTIVISM IN THE DIASPORA

While many first-generation Dalit immigrants, like Soundararajan's parents, made a conscious decision to conceal their Dalit identities and assimilate into the dominant coethnic Indian community, others like B. Singh and S. Kumar refused to assimilate. Instead of leaving the fight behind, they invested themselves in social activism. S. Kumar was a Dalit activist even while he was a student in India and remembers his delight and surprise in finding a network of Dalit activists in the US. He says:

> When I came to the US I was eager to find Dalit activists. I was surprised to find out that there was a huge movement going on in the United States. I found that there were so many professionals who had an organization called VISION. The organization was headed by Dr. Shobha Singh and there are some activists in Washington DC, like Dr. Laxmi Berwa. He is a known physician of that area. There is a strong movement in the US, not only in the US but all over North America.

As we detail below, Dalit activists in the US contribute to networks of Dalits in two main ways. First, by founding and investing in Dalit spaces and communities in the US, they have created alternative networks of support. The Ravi Dassi network, followers of Guru Ravidas, which we detail below, is one such platform. Second, by using global media platforms, Dalit activists have advanced their movement for rights beyond the confines of the nation-state. With multipronged activism, they have pushed back against caste politics, especially that of the Hindu Right in the diaspora, while simultaneously raising awareness on the global stage about the human rights violations that Dalits endured in India. Vivek Kumar writes that the politically conscious New Dalit Diaspora has also "influenced politically subdued 'old' dalit diaspora as well" (114).

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The Ravi Das temples have opened up an indomitable space of support for Dalits and Dalit rights in the US. With a global presence and approximately fifteen temples in North America, Ravi Dassis have done it all—from everyday mundane acts of support (such as offering a newly arrived immigrant food and a place to sleep) to organizing politically against casteism and untouchability.

The rise of the information economy and the resultant space-time compression in disseminating news of rampant caste-based violence in India—the homicides, rapes, and beatings—have connected aggrieved activists and allies in the diaspora. For example, as mentioned earlier, diasporic Dalits led by Shobha Singh formed Volunteers in Service to India's Oppressed and Neglected (VISION) in 1975. Over the years, Dalit activists have staged multiple protests in major cities of the US. B. Singh remembers:

> Families and friends from California, New Jersey, and New York area came together, and we protested when Ms. Indira Gandhi was visiting President Reagan. We met K.R. Narayan, the ambassador, and asked to meet Ms. Gandhi to express our concern about the killings of Dalits in Bihar and many other parts of India. But we were not given an opportunity to express our concerns. So we protested in front of the White House.

Peaceful protests became a way to raise awareness and discredit Indian dignitaries who uncritically endorse the urban IT economy of India as its success story. Civil protests against these double standards are a reminder to Western audiences and the upwardly mobile Indian immigrants that, as B. Singh says:

> There is slavery in the largest democracy in the world; we have a shining India campaign by BJP government; we export the highest number of software engineers. But you go to rural India, untouchability is still practiced. The upper caste have their separate reacups; lower castes have separate wells. Even in my home town of [name removed] there is big water tank which says "tank for harijans." We are living in the twenty-first century or in the eighteenth-century medieval times?

More recently, in September 2015, Dalit activists protested India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's, visit to the US. A month before that, noted US scholars engaged in South Asian studies circulated a petition expressing their concern over the "uncritical fanfare being generated" over his visit given that Modi's electoral platform was mired in allegations of vitriolic Hindu fundamentalism and Islamophobia that threatened both religious and caste minorities in India ("Faculty Statement").

Since the 1990s, liberalization of the Indian economy has amplified the political importance of supranational institutions of governance, such as the

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UN, the World Bank, and the IMF. Concomitantly, these transnational spaces have also become crucial sites for Dalit activism. The first international conference of Dalits was held in Malaysia in October 1998. Since then, the Dalit issue has slowly become a reckonable force at the level of the UN and the European Union. The participation of Dalit activists in the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa in 2001 (WCAR 2001), was a major turning point in Dalit transnational activism. For a Western audience, Dalit activists have raised consciousness about the reprehensible treatment meted out to them by using the language of human rights and by equating casteism to racism—a frame useful in conveying an otherwise "local" issue to the "global" audience.[13] Though both interview participants recognized the similarities as well as differences between racism and casteism, they regarded an equation between the two salient to contemporary transnational justice movements. Both emphatically argued that casteism is worse than racism. Illustrating his notion, B. Singh says:

> In America a black woman used to breastfeed a white infant. They used to clean and maintain the house, maintain laundry . . . but the Dalits in India are not allowed to even come close to upper caste. The Dalits of Peshawa in Pune have to carry a broom on their backs so that they clean the place of any pollution that they may create . . . yet again, when you have two tumbler system, you have two graveyards, two temples, two waterwells . . . when your barber refuses to cut your hair it is nothing but racism.

In the US, Dalit activists have also been vocal about alliances with other people of color. In doing so, they set themselves apart from the dominant Indian American ethnic community, especially the first-generation immigrants who have characteristically remained aloof from progressive race-based politics and have gone out of their way to repudiate any similarities with Black people in hopes of capitalizing on their model-minority status.[14] Even at its outset, VISION, which was formed by first-generation Dalit immigrants of the 70s, aligned with the Black Panthers and proudly became a sign of Black and Dalit unity, while the conservative Indian American hegemony remained invested in the rhetoric of the model minority. The progressive alliances endure as second-generation Soundararajan demonstrates: "I found my home within other communities of colour—women from these communities welcomed my experience and we found sisterhood in our shared intersections of sorrow" ("What It Means"). The participation of Dalit women in Incite's Color of Violence 4 Conference 2015 testifies to the presence of transnational feminist alliances. Thus Dalit activism in the US contests Dalit marginalization in multiple spaces and demonstrates a worldview that is distinct from "upper caste" Indian immigrants in the US.

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CONCLUSION

Despite their upper-class, seemingly assimilated lives, Dalit immigrants in the US continue to remain on the fringes of dominant and conservative Indian American culture. To many this marginalization is a painful reminder that culture—the good and the bad—moves with immigrants. While some migrants (in this case, the "upper caste" immigrants) seek to recreate and maintain caste hierarchies with a mixture of nostalgia and longing, others—like Dalits—wear it as an albatross around their necks, waiting to free themselves from its oppressive weight. Indeed, Dalits have pushed back. In their refusal to be erased and forgotten, they push back to demand that wrongs be righted, and they push back by reaching out to their less privileged community—Dalits in India and elsewhere—across the seas.

Based on this study we can make two interrelated arguments about the use of diaspora as a theoretical framework. First, the narratives of Dalit migrants in the US suggest that diaspora as a conceptual framework needs to take into consideration the more fluid and complex identities that characterize today's migrants. We argue that beyond the recognition of homeland connections, diaspora as a framework needs to take into account power inequalities and gendered, racialized hierarchies that shape the lives of diasporic groups in host societies as well. By shifting the emphasis in diaspora studies away from the homeland, we can begin to understand the experiences of second- and third-generation Dalits as racialized minorities in countries like the US, where there is a widespread lack of understanding of caste practices.

We also draw two sets of conclusions on the use of life narratives to study the lives of Dalit immigrants in the US. Sociologist C. Wright Mills uses the term "sociological imagination" to argue that "neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (6). Mill's main point is that a person's biography provides an insight into sociohistorical realities. He argues that larger structural forces and individual agency are inextricably linked, and as researchers, seeing the connections between the individual and the social is important.

Life narratives provided us the ideal tool to exercise our sociological imagination by demonstrating how the personal stories of Dalit migrants offer us a window into the historical, political, social, and transnational contexts that shape their lived experiences. Second, the use of life narratives as a methodological tool also enabled us to do justice to the diversity and multiplicity of identities within the Dalit diaspora. Specifically, the use of alternative data sources such as virtual blogs and online news stories allowed us to document experiences of Dalit women and postimmigrant-generation Dalits in the US,

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whose voices are often hard to access through conventional biographical interviews. The virtual data helped demonstrate how marginalized groups like Dalits use cyberspace not only to speak openly about issues important to them but also to mobilize support for members of their communities.

NOTES

1. See the editors' introduction to this special issue, which includes a more detailed note on caste and the caste system in India (Shankar and Gupta).
2. Vivek Kumar divides the Dalit diaspora into two streams. The "Old Dalit Diaspora" refers to the movement of indentured laborers to service the plantation economy during the colonial era while the "New" comprises the migration approximately after World War II to countries such as the US, UK, and Australia. Here we focus on the Dalit diaspora located in the US.
3. See also Brah; Manekar.
4. See also Yuval-Davis.
5. See Charu and Shankar; Ganguli.
6. See Iosifides and Sporton; Apitzch and Siouti.
7. See Wimmer and Glick Schiller; Levitt and Khagram.
8. Indian American Dalit activist Thenmozhi Soundararajan created www.dalitwomenfight.com to document stories of human rights violations against Dalit women. She is also the author of the blog *Dalit Nation*, which provides a platform for both her own writings as well as work of other Dalit scholars and activists.
9. See Plummer.
10. Her name has not been altered because the narrative we assess here has been distilled from writings by and about and interviews with Soundararajan that are already available online.
11. See Golden; Shankar.
12. For more on this framing, see Majumdar, which was published before the author took on the surname Adur.
13. See Prashad, *Karma of Brown Folk*.

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CASTE IN JAPAN
THE BURAKUMIN

JUNE A. GORDON

The narrow street is lined with people squatting on small stools tending steaming pots of boiled innards; behind them hang hunks of raw meat. Children joyfully run loose, kicking up dust as they shuffle back and forth, hiding in between the crevasses of the wooden walls that demarcate one space from another. Weaving in and out of upturned bicycles, plastic furniture, and odd wares for sale, dodging adult cries to calm down, are the mischievous faces of youth, testing their limits. While I am a stranger in this community, we muster little attention because my host, Professor Hideo Aoki, is known in the area, a longstanding human rights advocate and scholar and, more importantly, a trusted friend. To him a nod is offered, a greeting, a smile, or a brief wave of the hand. This is a community unlike most others in contemporary Japan. Here there is interaction and open communication, a village within an urban space. While all the stereotypes of a *buraku* that are common in Japan are confirmed within a few blocks of our route, within this space they take on a different meaning. How can laughter and cries of contestation across a dusty city street be viewed as vulgar and non-Japanese? How can suppression of feelings, emotions, and thoughts be seen as more acceptable? Do the Burakumin, people of the *buraku*, in fact represent an echoing back to a traditional Japanese past when the distinction between *tatemae* (what is displayed) and *honne* (what is felt) was not so rigidly enforced?

Hiroshima's *buraku* neighborhood of around six thousand members has been transformed over the past twenty years from a slum of rundown shacks into respectable newer housing, thanks to the pressure exerted on the government by the Buraku Liberation League, the principal organization for advancing the cause of the Burakumin since the end of the Asia-Pacific war. The area has become far more diverse in the process, not only because it lies next to the local Korean community and public housing for victims of the

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A-bomb, but also due to the influx of newly arrived immigrants, in particular the Chinese. Resting alongside the river and newly developed park, the community buzzes as people move in and out of small shops and eating places. The leather factory is now gone, along with many jobs, though the meat industry still thrives, providing a good living for individuals well positioned in the local hierarchy. Older people who live in the neighborhood tend to stay within its confines. As a result, it is difficult to measure accurately the changes in the degree of discrimination, since contact with the outer world is limited. A Buddhist temple in disarray stands as testimony to one priest's attempt to lift the community and fight discrimination from the prewar days. Now abandoned, it quietly bids the visitor to enter.

As a white female *gaijin* conducting research in Japan, I brought both personal and professional perspectives to a study of the Burakumin. My prior work with racial minorities in the US, as well as with working-class and non-working communities in the UK,[1] created an expectation that extending this research to Japan would take me into the low-income and troubled schools of urban Japan.[2] What I didn't realize at that time, even though I had lived and worked in Japan prior to this research, was that the people of Japan equated low-income status with the Burakumin (where *buraku* is equated with hamlet or village; and *min* is equated with people). While my awareness of "low-caste" communities in Japan was limited, I knew that there were Japanese who struggled both economically and educationally who did not identify as Burakumin. When I discussed this apparent conundrum with my Japanese colleagues, it became clear that the majority of Japanese cling passionately to the view of themselves as middle class, an identity shaped by the contrast between prewar and postwar conditions. By relegating Burakumin to an out-caste status, meaning that the discrimination they face is based on inherited status outside of the four traditional Confucian caste labels (samurai, farmers, artisans, merchants), other Japanese absolve themselves of holding to prewar social hierarchies and inequalities. The caste system goes back hundreds of years to the Edo period (1603–1867) when one's status was defined not by money but by birth, which could not be altered. At the end of WWII, liberation came in many forms but it did not remove the harsh, inequitable conditions of most Burakumin, which tainted the image of modern Japan. By not acknowledging the existence of the Burakumin, Japanese were able to continue to believe themselves to be middle class or class-less.

In accepting the advice of my colleagues to focus on the Burakumin, I quickly became aware that I was moving into a space, both psychological and physical, that few people know much about and that is claimed as a "taboo

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topic of conversation, not to mention as a topic of research. Over the next five years of fieldwork on schooling, immigration, and changing attitudes toward teachers in Japan,[3] the study of Burakumin became the major narrative of my professional life. Since I could not directly experience the lives of the people in the *buraku*, I relied on teachers, community leaders, and fellow scholars for introductions to schools, teachers, organizations, and neighborhoods that engaged children stigmatized by Burakumin identity.[4] In the process, my professional life joined with the scholars and activists of postwar Japan who had devoted and risked their careers to the amelioration of caste discrimination in their nation. The resulting work presented here combines the lives of the Burakumin, the work of teachers, activists, scholars, and my own experience in Japan.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While most writing on caste emanates from South Asia, my research explores caste in Japan as expressed in the lives of those known as the Burakumin, Japanese citizens who for generations have lived as outcastes based on the professions and neighborhoods of their presumed ancestors.[5] Modern Burakumin history must be viewed in four broad eras: prewar (1920–40s), early postwar (1945–1960s), the antidiscrimination movement (1969–2002), and post-Special Measures (2002–present).

Prewar Japan saw the development of progressive efforts to address discrimination against the Burakumin. However, due to the fascist government's need to focus on national solidarity during military expansion, leftist groups attempting to address particular social problems, such as the housing, health, and educational deficiencies in *buraku* areas, were outlawed.[6] Early postwar Japan brought US occupation but also the liberalization of unions, voting rights for women, and a resurgence of social movements. One of these movements, led by a broad coalition of activists, focused on social inequalities and in particular the Burakumin.[7] The Buraku Liberation League (BLL) pressured the government not only to acknowledge the plight of the Burakumin but to find ways to compensate them for historical degradation. Such compensation came in the form of the Special Measures, an antidiscrimination program that lasted from 1969 to 2002, and included educational efforts to increase support and success for youth living in various *buraku* communities throughout Japan.[8] Dōwa Kyōiku, as it was called, took the form of what might be considered affirmative action in that additional teachers were sent to *dowa* schools, students were provided with extracurricular education, and resources were increased. However, in 2002 the national government

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officially terminated the Special Measures and announced that discrimination no longer existed; the "problem" of the Burakumin had been solved. In reality, due to numerous outside pressures, the programs and special services offered to the Burakumin were now to be expanded to include women, Korean Zainichi, those with disabilities, immigrants and other minorities. The Burakumin were now subsumed within the more inclusive human rights, or Jinken movement, in order to appease the demands of other marginalized groups while still allowing the BLL to remain a dominant voice in advancing human rights in Japan.[9]

WHO ARE THE BURAKUMIN?

During Japan's long history of nation-building, various individuals and families lived on the margins of society due to their social standing, occupation or location.[10] These people served the essential interests of the host society by carrying out undesirable tasks and performing services considered demeaning and/or polluting, such as animal butchering, human burial, and gardening as well as waste removal and guard duty. Families who lived in certain areas were assigned to this work and came to be identified with the labor that was viewed as contaminated; they were called the *eta* (impure), a term replaced in postwar Japan by the term Burakumin, which I use throughout this paper.

Organized along a traditional hierarchy with an elder, or head chieftain in charge of claiming rights to certain trades and involved in internal policing of the group, Burakumin had a degree of autonomy and protection as long as they accepted their outcaste status. They were not marginal in the sense of being dispensable; they were valued and necessary contributors to society, doing work that was essential for the functioning of Japan's villages and towns. Other groups, such as itinerate performers, beggars, and prostitutes were known as *hinin* (nonhuman). These two major groups, the *eta* and *hinin*, were combined in various ways and at various points in time to constitute what has been viewed by many as outcaste, meaning that they operated outside the traditional hierarchy of warriors (samurai), farmers, artisans, and merchants. At varying points in time, the nobility, centered in the imperial court, or the Shogunate, a ruling military regime, ruled over the system and saw to its enforcement.

During the eighth to twelfth centuries Japan's outcastes formed a category called *senmin*, or "lowly people," and were not allowed to intermarry with *ryōmin*, the "good people," within the Confucian hierarchy. Still, some *senmin* were able to move out of stigmatized labor into farming or other skilled trades as power shifted between feudal warlords. While previously a rather fluid group of individuals whose status depended on demand for services and the

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political necessities of the period, the relative calm and tightening hold of the Tokugawa regime (the Shogunate period, 1603–1867) increasingly fixed and legitimated their marginal status and segregated habitat. Shintoism provided further justification for discrimination insofar as it prohibited contact with the unclean, including the diseased, the dead, and women during childbirth. Buddhism followed with prohibitions against the slaughtering and eating of animals. Segregated Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines were set aside for outcastes and reinforced their difference. Caste distinctions were expressed in costume, hair styles, footwear, and, most famously, in the two swords of the samurai that could be used against the lower castes with impunity.

With the Meiji restoration of the imperial dynasty (1867–1889), a new national government created the concept of a national citizenry, legally eliminating the caste system. The obvious embarrassment of a caste-like minority group within a modern nation, as well as the desire for the new government to eliminate any intermediate contenders for power, such as the elder chieftains, led to the official emancipation of the *eta* and *hinin* and resulted in their new designation as Shinheimin, or "new commoners" in 1871. However, the unofficial social standing of the Shinheimin did not change; local custom dictated a continuation of their traditional tasks as the proper livelihood of the "new commoners." While primarily identified by separate neighborhoods and villages to which they were restricted, the people who have come to be known euphemistically as Burakumin continued to dominate the work of butchering, leather making, sanitation, and refuse collection. Living in isolated communities, often along riverbanks or on undesirable land, the Burakumin developed some degree of identifiable diets, manners, dialects, and local loyalties different from their commoner neighbors who resented the emancipation of the Burakumin. Resentment turned to mindless violence in several cases following the Emancipation Edict, resulting in protests and, in a few incidences, the burning of Burakumin villages.

While discrimination toward the Burakumin previously had legal sanction, after the edict, discrimination was not protected by the rule of law in the newly constituted society. The emancipation edict, in officially removing the stigma of caste, also eliminated prior protections provided for the Burakumin and the monopolies that they held on certain trades.[11] Rather, the land from their villages was often redistributed, leaving them landless and without a tax base to draw upon for social services, including the education of their youth. These actions left the Burakumin to struggle for survival in a society that had not forgotten their historical standing as a contaminated caste, often in urban ghettos shared with other deprived citizens. Due to effective housing segregation and other cultural practices, in spite of the emancipation, edict

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discrimination in marriage, employment, and residence continued on both government and nongovernment levels into the early years of the twentieth century.

In 1922, in the midst of socialist and communist movements taking place around the world, the Burakumin and their allies found organized form in the Suiheisha, or Levelers' Society. The main tactic of the Suiheisha was denunciation (*kyūudan tōosōo*), which forced perpetrators of hate speech and injurious acts toward Burakumin to apologize publicly. The next decade brought political victories on a variety of fronts, including the improvement of the status of women, Shin Fujin Kyoukai, and the large-scale Burakumin liberation movement, Buraku Kaihōo Undōo. In pursuit of a unified nationalist cause and military manpower, the Japanese government in 1942, during a wartime period of growing fascist rule, passed legislation banning social protest and stressing a common citizenship. Suiheisha was forced to disband and the momentum it had gained was consumed by the militarization of the nation and its imperial project. To further the perception, if not the reality, of a cohesive nation, the term used to refer to *buraku* issues shifted from *yūwa*, meaning appeasement, to *dōwa*, meaning "same" or "harmony." Given that the original use of the word *dōwa* came as part of the Imperial Edict in 1926 to maintain order and assimilate those elements of the populace that could potentially destabilize the country, some activists chafe at its application to contemporary liberation causes. The continued use of *dōwa* to refer to Burakumin issues, in particular education, in postwar Japan seems a bit puzzling given its close association with the imperial system, but in fact this term came down to a point of convenience and respect. Throughout the Suiheisha period (1920–40s) many teachers who worked with Burakumin youth identified themselves as *dōwa* educators and formed various associations, including the National Dowa Education Association (Zendōkyo).

As people began to respond to the phenomenal changes pressed upon them in postwar chaos combined with international movements around the world, basic philosophical differences began to emerge regarding how to reengage and reconceptualize "the movement." Suiheisha, which had transformed into the Buraku Liberation Committee in 1946, now became the Buraku Liberation League (Buraku Kaihoo Domei, BLL) in 1955. The first two decades of postwar Japan brought an alliance between the country's two leftist parties, the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), in support of the BLL and their efforts to improve the economic, social, and educational welfare of Burakumin. The National Teacher's Union was another strong voice for Burakumin and other human rights. Leftist efforts in Japan were generally suppressed in the 1950s as the occupying US administration

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aced with conservative business and imperial interests in facing the threats of North Korea and its Soviet and Chinese support.

After BLL's years of struggle and perseverance, a government review of conditions in the nation's several hundred *buraku* made recommendations for improvement in 1965 that led in 1969 to national legislation known as the Special Measures. The programs put forward attempted to address disadvantages in housing, health care, transportation, education, and employment. Except for the funding used for educational enhancement, the implementation was largely left to local governments. The school projects that were developed to remediate and open access to Burakumin youth who had been blocked for generations were part of what came to be known as Dōwa *kyōiku*, loosely defined as "education for liberation." Specific schools with significant populations of Burakumin youth and who agreed to the appellation were designated as *dōwa* schools.[12] Some districts and schools that could have accepted *dōwa* designation refused it in order to minimize their reputation as *buraku* and the stigmatization that followed.

BURAKUMIN IN MODERN JAPAN

Crucial to our topic is the understanding that the Burakumin identity is legally a matter of residence; anyone living in a known *buraku* can be seen and accept identity as Burakumin. One's home village, *furusato*, is of great importance in Japanese life; it is traditionally where one's identity was registered in the *koseki*, an official document held in the local temple. Even today one can find these local census records and historical maps to affirm the location of *buraku* communities (Amos 62–67). According to Aoki,

> The last official survey of the national Burakumin population organizes the data according to region: 533,000 people in the 781 *burakus* in the Kinki region, 261,000 in the 1,052 *burakus* in the Chyūgoku region, 454,000 in the 835 *burakus* in the Kyushu region, 260,000 in the 670 *burakus* in the Shikoku region, 319,000 in the 572 *burakus* in the Kantō region, and 329,000 in the 532 *burakus* in the Chūbu region. The Kinki region has a lot of large urban *burakus*. The Chugoku region has a lot of small fishing and agrarian *burakus*. The Kyūshū region has a lot of urban and agrarian *burakus*. Its (former) coal mining areas have a lot of *burakus* that formed in the modern era. The Kanto region has a lot of small urban *burakus*. Meanwhile, the Chūbu region has a lot of small agrarian *burakus*. Many of the jobs in the urban *burakus* are in the manufacturing, construction, and service industries. (164)

US firebombing of Japan's major cities at the end of WWII, especially Tokyo, destroyed the identity of most prewar urban *buraku*, although investigations easily uncover businesses and community organizations with Burakumin

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participation (Amos 58–62). Advocacy groups now estimate the number of Burakumin as approximating three million; however, since the end of the Special Measures, the government claims that the number has decreased to one or two million. It must be said that any discussion of *buraku* and their residents, past and present, is fraught with historical and legal ambiguity; all estimates are based on a fluid and complex accounting of residence. There is no doubt, however, that there has been a focused and determined effort by a series of organizations to resist discrimination directed at assumed Burakumin, even if everything else is open to interpretation.

In the 1970s and 1980s while communities and schools with large populations of Burakumin were infused with resources, a negative stigma remained, as did numerous forms of social marginalization.[13] Improvement in physical structures of the community did not alter private employment practices or the relative socioeconomic status of the group; neither did it significantly impact the academic engagement of Burakumin students as had been anticipated.[14] The historical legacy of discrimination has left many parents illiterate, unemployed, on social benefits, and unsure of the connection between education and success.[15] One effort to reclaim a space for personal, educational, and economic development took place in a community where I conducted about half of this research. Located in a longstanding *buraku* in the southern part of Osaka, a new school was proposed to provide children with the opportunity to attend a school within their own community, closer to their homes.[16] Discussions that were underway as early as the 1960s faced particularly strong resistance from elderly non-Burakumin who did not want their grandchildren studying alongside *buraku* youth. Sensitive to this possibility and needing the cooperation of all concerned, the individuals who resisted were not openly accused of discrimination but rather brought along over the years to see the value of having a beautiful new school located in their neighborhood. When the school finally opened, only ten percent of the students were identified as Burakumin. Other students were either low-income Japanese or immigrants, both voluntary and involuntary, in particular Zainichi, people of Korean descent, or individuals of Chinese ancestry. While the school remains as a beacon of hope for Burakumin in the area, it retains a negative image as a *dōwa* school in the wider community.

A significant transformation over these last thirty-five years relates to the composition of the *buraku* communities. While there have always been low-income non-Burakumin living in these areas, the number has increased, including recent and long-standing immigrants. The migration of people into such communities to live in cheap, government-subsidized housing—a result of the Special Measures and open to all—has attracted non-Burakumin to

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areas where the gains were won by those now in the minority again. The majority of people now living in places previously known as *buraku* are not Burakumin by their own or any known authority. However, the new migrants pay a high price for low-cost housing, as those within the community are subject to informal discrimination in marriage and employment due to their residential status. Those who make a point of denying any Burakumin identity end up being subject to the scorn of their neighbors, while others accept the situation along with the lower-status identity.

In contrast to immigrant groups, the Burakumin have no alternative country of origin from which they can claim roots or through which they can create a real or fictitious positive identity. To borrow at length from Hideo Aoki, who hosted me in Hiroshima and is the colleague with whom I walked the local *buraku* that I described at the beginning of this essay:

> Burakumin are discriminated against based on their descent as real or *imagined* "descendants of outcastes." De Vos and Wagatsuma (1966) understand the Burakumin through concepts of race or caste. They apply racial and caste concepts on the Burakumin as they believe that the mentality of the discriminators and Burakumin response to discrimination is identical to that of American and Indian minorities. However, racial concepts tend to place an emphasis on our physical characteristics. Even when this escalates to create a *social* race, the basic principle still applies. Another theory believes that the Burakumin are of a different race. The use of racial concepts will inevitably support this view.
>
> Secondly, caste refers to people who have been classified based on "endogamy," "hereditary status," and "class based hierarchy." Caste concepts are also often applied to similar groups in countries other than India. For example, African Americans are referred to as the American caste. However, Burakumin in the modern age are not living within a system of social hierarchy as seen with the Indian castes. Religiosity is also negligible. The concept of uncleanness lies at the root of discrimination both against the Burakumin as well as caste discrimination. Today, however, the concept of uncleanness is no longer expressed directly in acts of discrimination against the Burakumin. Buddhist notions of metempsychosis, karma, and the like have also receded. Discrimination against the Burakumin is generally *conceived* as the "remnants of the feudal status system." This gives rise to the *belief* that discrimination against the Burakumin will (supposedly) disappear with the advent of modernization. However, discrimination against the Burakumin as it exists today was reconstructed after the start of the modern age and has not disappeared since it started. The Burakumin are also different from African Americans. The Burakumin are both racially and culturally invisible. The Burakumin are a (modern) social status group who are discriminated against based on a *belief about their descent* that they are real or imagined "descendants of outcastes." (172)

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THE RESEARCHER

My research has been a unique process during several years in an attempt to understand existing Japanese communities proscribed as "low caste," unwanted, and even, for political expediency's sake, denied an existence. The process has been complex and at times painful for all involved. Discussing these matters is difficult for those willing to claim Burakumin identity or who work within organizations committed to ameliorating the apparent and clearly irrational stigma still applied to anyone or any neighborhood given the Burakumin identity—whether or not they accept that identity. No recent or reliable statistics provide data on the number of Burakumin, where they live, or the level of discrimination they currently face, since the subject is itself taboo within Japanese society and government. Complicating this situation is the fact that first-person accounts by Burakumin are rare. One of the most famous firsthand accounts of prewar *buraku* life is by Sumii; however, this text is only partially available and the author is someone who lived in the same village but did not identify as Burakumin. Other material in Japanese with Burakumin authors has long been available but largely unexamined by non-Japanese scholars. Efforts to publish texts either by or about the Burakumin are suppressed by a combination of those attempting to support the Burakumin by avoiding critical work and by unwritten rules within the general society that such accounts are undesirable.[19]

Most contemporary Japanese claim to know nothing about the continued existence of Burakumin and those who do are afraid to speak of them, either in using their present-day appellation, Burakumin, or their former, *eta*. Access to *buraku* is extremely difficult for outsiders because the interpretation of findings about this community is scrutinized for political correctness. Discussion of the Burakumin, not to mention research, is caught within webs of complexity both political and social. One clear example of such an attempt to block dissemination of information was the termination of a contract to publish my research on the education of Burakumin after it had been published in English as *Japan's Outcaste Youth* and translated into Japanese. Turning this research into a book was not my idea but rather that of many Japanese educators and community activists with whom I had explored the limitations of Burakumin access to schooling over several years. Their view was that the publication of my work would not only reveal that discrimination continues but also clarify the complexity of the conditions that the Burakumin community face in its present state, which was as the Special Measures were coming to an end. While the book was being prepared for publication in English, I was asked by a leading scholar if he could translate it into Japanese. His reputation

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of working with and allying with the causes of the Burakumin is strong, so it seemed like a good match. I was aware of the complicated protocols of transaction in Japan, meaning that an invitation has to come by someone of comparable status to do a translation. Akashi Shoten, the leading human-rights publisher in Japan, had already published two of my prior books on marginalized communities in the US after they had been translated into Japanese by two other Japanese scholars.[18] They have been used in graduate courses in the sociology of education in Japan ever since. However, discussing infringements on social justice in the US or the UK is radically different from exposing the underbelly of Japanese society. Yet, even though the *Outcaste* book was more contentious within the Japanese context, I was assured by Mr. Ishii,[19] whom I had met previously and spoken to extensively, that this new book would be a valuable addition to his distinguished catalog of books on marginalized communities around the world. A contract was drawn up and plans went forward. However, at the last minute, without any reason offered, I received an email from the translator that the book could not move into production. I learned unofficially that there had been resistance on the part of some Burakumin advocates to a Japanese translation of a book on this taboo subject. A complete explanation has never been offered and, given the importance of the relationship with my colleagues in Japan, I have never asked.

The termination of the work affected many people who had labored over the years to illuminate the complexity of this topic. Much of the writing on the Burakumin, particularly that which is written in English, regurgitates historical sources of discrimination, such as family lineage or traditional occupations relegated to the Burakumin dealing with the dead or contaminated, such as tanning, butchery, burials, and gardening. According to Osaka City University Professor Noguchi in the text *Burakumin Mondai no "Paradigm" Tenkan*,[20] focusing on these issues creates misunderstanding and blinds people to the far more complex issues Burakumin face today, which are a result of changes that have rapidly been unfolding since the 1980s. But as seen above, even with the support of a leading publisher, Mr. Ishii, who is himself Burakumin, and his company, Akashi Shoten, scholarship on the Burakumin requires more than a courageous champion as political considerations may limit publication in translation. Meanwhile, research and debates on the origins and continuity of injustices continue apace among both Japanese- and English-language scholars.[21]

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RESEARCH

My research involved several years of engagement with numerous schools and community organizations throughout Japan in areas that had been historically identified as having large populations of Burakumin. I focused in particular on the teachers and scholars who had committed their lives to working with Burakumin youth and their families while they simultaneously interrogated and educated the larger society in an attempt to alter the feudal mindset that held prejudices in place.[22] This research also required, both directly and indirectly, engagement with members of the longstanding advocacy group, the Buraku Liberation League (BLL).

My journey into a world usually closed to outsiders and avoided by the vast majority of Japanese required face-to-face introductions from people whom the Burakumin not only trusted but who had proven their worth through significant self-sacrifice within their own communities.[24] This process began when I met Professor Noguchi, a longtime researcher and activist within the struggle for Burakumin liberation. Accepting an invitation to their home, I listened as Noguchi's wife, a retired teacher and a member of the Burakumin community, shared her experiences of trying to organize teachers in the 1970s. She informed me that "Twenty-five years ago most teachers did not want to work with or teach Burakumin; they hated them." To move them beyond fear and resistance, she invited them to come to the local community center, a settlement house for Burakumin located in each community. Her mission was two-fold: 1) to educate teachers about the history of the Burakumin, their identity, and concerns, and 2) to ask teachers to provide additional support for students in identifying learning problems while collaborating with parents in an attempt to better prepare their children for life at school. Her initial efforts at organizing proved futile; teachers would not come, claiming that such requests were beyond the call of duty and asking, "Why should we take our free time to visit such a center?" Ironically, she claimed, "Once the students learned of their teachers' refusal to attend, several students, enraged by the insult, committed themselves to the idea of becoming a teacher so as to prevent the next generation of Burakumin children from receiving similar treatment."

Professor Noguchi suggested I meet Mr. Maruyama, a teacher at nearby Abiko Minami (a junior high school) who served as the Dōwa Kyōiku coordinator, a complicated position that negotiated the needs of the community within the legal constraints of the government, both local and national. Little did either of us know at that time that this would become a long-term relationship with my returning year after year for ten years as I expanded my network and created allies, enabling me to ask questions and gain insights into

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historically complex topic fraught with trap doors. Maruyama had taught low-income *dōwa* schools for more than twenty years. Not of Burakumin ancestry himself, it had taken him some time to gain the trust of the community as someone to whom parents could send their children. When asked the reason for his lifelong commitment, he would launch into a discussion on "worker consciousness"; he enjoyed "working with deviant, trouble-making youth," finding them refreshing and insightful (Maruyama). Critical of himself and others, and aware of the interplay of history with contemporary demands on marginalized youth, he often would fret over not having reached a certain student or not having understood their needs. Never the flashy radical, he worked in the background, supporting those who spoke more eloquently or were willing to take more controversial stands. But he endured where others did not or could not.

Arriving at the door of Abiko Minami adjacent to a longstanding *buraku*, Asaka, are the children whose lives are complicated not only by identity, poverty, and discrimination, but also a historical legacy of low academic performance. Interviews with teachers in several *dōwa* schools show that the stigma felt by and the mark left on family and community patterns due to hundreds of years of oppression play a significant role in the degree to which young people engage with schooling. A major part of the Dōwa Kyōiku agenda, especially in schools and communities as mixed as Asaka, was to educate non-Burakumin about this history so that they might move beyond the stories and gossip that keep families separated and communities divided.[24] It was an awesome task.

In the 1960s and 70s it was not uncommon for some activist teachers to take the stance that the success of the Burakumin liberation movement was largely based on embracing one's identity and openly revealing past and present discrimination. These teachers encouraged, sometimes quite forcibly, their colleagues to confront their own prejudice openly and to invite Burakumin youth to share their experiences in class.[25] As a result, some young people whose parents may have hidden their identity from them were as shocked to find out that they were Burakumin as were their schoolmates. In some schools such acknowledgement or "outing" could serve as a route to empowerment, while in others it became a vehicle for shame and bullying. The teachers who worked in schools like Abiko Minami walked a fine line between exposing and representing issues that some families would rather not have disclosed or discussed.[26]

My school visits and interviews with teachers began during the last few years of the Special Measures and the educational programs that included *dōwa* programs at schools like Abiko Minami. It took me a few minutes to

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gather the pieces of the puzzle to understand why one such teacher, Ms. Yamamoto, had become a teacher at a *dōwa* school. She spoke effortlessly, which was a tribute to her trust in Maruyama that he would not subject her to an interview with a foreigner who was unfamiliar with the issues she faced. Her father died when she was twelve due in part to alcoholism and in part to despair; he had been unemployed for some time prior to this death. As she continued to lay out her journey into teaching, glances went around the room: did I get it? Did I know yet? Had the clues been sufficient? Ten minutes later she spoke even more plainly and declared that she was Burakumin. I looked over to Maruyama and he nodded; it was okay to go further, and the scripted interview questions shifted in direction as I inquired more fully about attitudes toward Burakumin and the ways in which she saw "her culture" as "different."

Leaving Abiko Minami, we later met in the Osaka office of Ms. Nakamura, who agreed to share her experience as a teacher and scholar devoted to understanding and undoing discrimination of the Burakumin. Wanting to learn from her expertise and gain from her study and personal journey, I asked her to describe how she conceived of Burakumin culture as different from Japanese culture. She was silent for a while before she began musing on the reality that there was no difference, but then she ventured, "If the culture comes out publicly, sometimes it is praiseworthy but sometimes it is abominable." She went on searching for explanations for the stereotypical images that people cling to in order to maintain social hierarchies. One of the most common is a difference in dietary culture. The Burakumin are known to eat the entrails of animals, parts that supposedly cultured people wouldn't eat but poor people would have to. Though years have passed and there have been great gains since the liberation movement, Nakamura reminded us, "There are still many people who believe that the Burakumin are fierce. They have an image of *buraku* people that they do dreadful things."

Maruyama conceded that the problem is most prevalent in the case of marriage. When I inquired how people would know if someone was Burakumin, he alluded to the Kōshinsho, an investigation that occurs prior to marriage based on the *koseki* or equivalent records. Results of such an inquiry lead to a document that is given at the marriage ceremony. Apparently when people do not produce it, sometimes because they don't believe that such forms of discrimination are acceptable, it is assumed that they are hiding something, usually that they are not "real" Japanese. Even the threat that a person could be Burakumin has terminated many a marriage. An official survey distributed in 2000 asked thousands of residents in Osaka if discrimination against *buraku* people was still a part of daily life.[27] The majority answered "yes, but only

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marriage and work," probably the two most significant areas of one's life. Although largely banned, the use of *koseki* records in the form of a notorious "black book" was common and still surfaced as late as 2002 among Japanese companies seeking to discriminate against applicants.[28] The next survey question was "When choosing a place to live, would you agree to live near *buraku* people?" Most people answered, "I would not." So, this takes in the third most important issue, housing.

When I returned to Osaka in 2003, the situation in *dōwa* schools had changed radically. The termination of the Special Measures legislation in 2002 meant that additional funding and support would no longer be granted to schools simply because they had large Burakumin populations. Schools were officially not allowed to know the identity of their students, nor could they single out youth for extra assistance. Activist teachers connected to the BLL were moved out of predominantly Burakumin schools. Teachers who had been trained in and worked under the directives of the BLL suddenly found themselves without a singular mission.[29] Added to policy changes that directly impacted *dōwa* schools were new national educational reforms demanding alterations in the length of the school week, the implementation of a new integrated curriculum, and a movement toward pedagogical practices that few teachers understood.[32] The complexity of this context offered me the opportunity to see how schools, educators, students, parents, and communities were responding to the changes.

Arriving at a formerly designated *dōwa* school, Maruyama and I were put at ease immediately as Principal Mizuno settled us into overstuffed chairs and enthusiastically began offering a profile of his students; it clearly is not a picture typically conjured up in Western images of Japan: "The divorce rate of the parents in this school is over 50 percent. About 30 percent live with one parent; some live with only their mother and some their father. Altogether the rate of students living with real [both birth] parents is 50 percent. The rate of students with a stepparent because of remarriage is 20 percent." Maruyama, who was listening attentively, to whom I assumed all this would be familiar given his years working in *dōwa* schools and the community, inquired if this breakup of the family is a recent tendency. Mizuno clarified that it was not; in fact, there had long been a situation of what he called "fatherless families" in this school. According to him, and verified by other interviews, there was a tradition of intermarriage among members of the same community. Mizuno went on to say, "This is largely due to discrimination. They divorce easily and either divorce, they live in the neighborhood. And then they remarry to another person. So, their blood becomes thicker."[31]

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In other interviews a different but related set of issues emerged, such a early pregnancy and marriage. When the average age of marriage for young women in Japan was about twenty-six or older, some were getting pregnant and/or married as young as sixteen. Burakumin seem to be overrepresented in these outliers. They also tend to take on adult responsibilities earlier, in part because they are not staying in school. This situation was exacerbated by the economic crises of the 1990s as well as by the elimination of financial support to the Burakumin in 2002. There is, however, an underlying policy as well as a philosophy in the districts where *dōwa* education is taught that lack of funding should not be a reason to give up on schooling. If students want to continue on to high school, scholarships can be found to pay for tuition fees. Junior high school teachers in these schools have therefore faced a particularly difficult challenge to convince parents that the cost of high school, which is not free or compulsory for anyone, is worth the effort. At a time of economic instability, this argument has been muted as parents have been laid off and income from working young people has been seen as a potential for economic survival. Youth who may not be engaged at school, academically or socially, may be more than willing to seek immediate gratification over perseverance, especially if the likelihood is that discrimination will ultimately thwart their employment efforts anyway.

Usually it is only through *kateihōmon* (home visits) that teachers find out the real situation that a child is confronting. As one teacher said, "In daily talk, children never tell us that the factory where their father or mother was working became bankrupt or that someone has been injured or is ill" (Komin). The economic crisis of recent years has affected many low-income families as the employees of subcontractors have lost their jobs in the wake of bankruptcies among larger companies that they supplied. The end result is that many families in low-income communities turn to public assistance. But, in Japan, admitting that one is in need of aid is not easy and the desire to appear self-sufficient is strong. Yet for Burakumin the situation is slightly different. Few Burakumin families work in factories; most are employed in small shops and businesses within their community, often related to leather goods. Much of the work is part time and often conducted in their homes. And while this might be viewed as a dated stereotype, I am told repeatedly that Burakumin are butchers or do work that involves the transportation of the dead, including humans, animals, and their byproducts. Such work has contributed to the treatment of the Burakumin as Japan's "untouchables." But the fact that this stigma, more than two hundred years old, continues into modern Japan with the power to impede access to housing, marriage, and employment is bewildering to say the least.

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Mr. Sasaki, a small, intense, wiry, enthusiastic man of about forty-five years of age, was introduced to me as the Chief Dōwa Kyōiku Coordinator for the city of Osaka. Glancing back and forth between Maruyama and me, he waits for a sign, a benchmark from which to begin this outflow, this interview, set up by his trusted friend, a far more radical activist teacher than himself, to a stranger, a foreign woman. Knowing that his school has recently seen an influx of non-Burakumin individuals and wanting to secure his engagement, I begin with a neutral inquiry: How has the composition of students over the last few years changed in your school? He chooses as a response a finely grained analysis of the ways in which the consciousness of Burakumin parents has changed. According to Sasaki, during the time of the Buraku Liberation Movement, parents were very active in organizing for the improvement of their children's education. Teachers often went into the *mura* (village) and talked with parents about education. This activity has now changed drastically. Sasaki claims, "The organization which parents formed for their children's education doesn't work anymore. So parents don't say to children, 'Since you are *buraku* children, you have to be strong.'" He worries that the children don't realize that they are Burakumin. This might seem like an issue of assimilation, but lack of identity with the *buraku* movement and community seems to have affected the academic success of these children as well, not only by the termination of scholarship money but also by the assumption by non-Burakumin that the problems, if not the Burakumin themselves, have disappeared. Sasaki claimed that one of the biggest problems now is that the government does not allow for identification of Burakumin. Since schools are more mixed in population and teachers do not know clearly how to teach about *buraku* issues or which students need more support in terms of their identity formation, they are at a loss. The sadness in his voice was obvious, as was the confusion around how to respond to student needs, which remain serious, even though officially they have disappeared. I wondered if the government believed that equity will arise simply by wishing it so. Having interviewed a significant number of Japanese teachers in dozens of schools across Japan who have expressed negative views of the Burakumin and supplied me with a host of supposedly unique characteristics that demarcate Burakumin from other Japanese, I asked Sasaki if teachers are allowed the time and safe space to talk about *buraku* problems among themselves. He responds:

> Teachers are very sensitive to discrimination. [Harkening back to leftist tendencies and social justice agendas held by the teachers' union.] So, when they encounter a scene of discrimination, they talk about it and teach students about discrimination, regardless of whether those who are discriminated against are disabled, Zainichi, or *buraku* students. But there is a problem about who will tell *buraku* children that

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they are from the *buraku*: parents or teachers? Parents may hide the fact; so teachers try to make contact with parents to understand their views. Many years ago, *buraku* students came to school with a cloth on their chest which read, "I am from Asaka and a member of *buraku* liberation alliance." So teachers could talk about *dōwa* education openly, but now there is no such alliance.

I inquired about the potential stigma that this forthright insignia might cause. He was aware of the complexity of this issue, how things have changed, and unsure of how he should respond to me or if he would even continue the conversation. He knew that I was not looking for definitive answers, but he seemed to wish he had them, for himself if not for me. Today is not thirty years ago. Back then such an emblem did create a stigma, but one of resistance and pride. This was true as long as the liberation movement remained strong and enabled people to draw upon it for sustenance and power. When the movement began to fracture, in part due to its success, assimilation for some became more desirable than identification. Stories abound, regardless of how true or how many, that as the Burakumin gained economically from government compensation, movement out of the *buraku* became inevitable. The desirability to pass in a society in which meeting the group norm is paramount cannot be faulted.

CONCLUSION

This paper finds its place amid accounts of issues facing the Dalits of India, including their efforts for expression and liberation. India's *varna-jati* system is similar to, but different from, the Japanese social hierarchical traditions that call on issues of contamination to define access to society, creating categories such as Burakumin. Both systems have ancient origins that have been reinforced with legal and official designations. Dalits can seek liberation in many forms, both as a collective and as individuals, but they do so with forms of recognition lacking for the Burakumin of Japan (Amos 18–32). The uncertainty and ambiguity of the Burakumin identity and how one claims it or is ascribed to it, allows for "passing" as well as prejudice and discrimination without formal challenge or retribution, mostly in the areas of marriage, residence, and employment.[32] While some escape these constraints, "passing" can be treacherous within Japanese society, which is still fraught with concern for maintaining the purity of the imagined Japanese "race" and its grounding in the traditional village.[33]

Who is defined as Burakumin has altered over the centuries as Burakumin services have been in more or less demand, as well as when certain groups were removed from the category. Similarly, a range of programs has been

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implemented over the years to ameliorate the conditions within the various *buraku* throughout Japan. Some of these programs were terminated during the height of Japan's militaristic and nationalistic period of the early 1920s and 30s only to resurface in new forms along with the Occupation. In the 1960s yet another attempt took form, the Special Measures, in large part due to pressure from radicals within the Buraku Liberation League and those supporting its aims, who pressed for government compensation for enduring discrimination.

Since the termination of this policy, what was once seen as a liberation movement for Burakumin has now found itself included among many other groups who claim marginality, such as women, the disabled, Korean Zainichi, and immigrant groups, in a broad Human Rights Education (Jinken Kyōiku) movement. This inclusiveness has altered the focus of *dōwa* education and, as some would say, diluted the original intention from ending discrimination against Burakumin to embracing human rights for everyone.[34] Some may see this as a move toward a more multicultural orientation, but in Japan the prejudices against Burakumin are unique and deeply rooted. If knowledge of historical underpinnings of discrimination against the Burakumin disappears, will they continue to be viewed as a contaminated caste or simply be relegated to the bottom rung of Japanese society without any explanation or context other than self-inflicted isolation? My view is that an end to the prejudices apparent in Japanese society toward alleged Burakumin or residents in *buraku* communities will be slow in coming and largely impervious to research or legislation now designed to promote the human rights of Japan's many minority and disadvantaged peoples.

In an effort to work against these ongoing prejudices, this essay employs stories of and about Burakumin, as narrated by them, and by the educators and teachers who work among and along with them. They together weave a complex narrative of Burakumin lives as they grapple with denying or unmasking their marginalized identity while continuing to face discrimination in inexplicable ways. The many interviews I undertook with students and teachers constitute fragmentary pieces of a kind of life narrative of the Burakumin. These interviews are a rich source through which to explore caste consciousness in Japanese society and to uncover a story that has been suppressed and evaded. Life narratives as a *form* and *method* enrich our understandings of the Burakumin. The "unwritten rules" regarding first-person accounts work as they play a "witnessing function." It is in this context that I offer excerpts from my fieldwork and ethnographic interviews—excerpts that capture aspects of the lives of Burakumin and non-Burakumin who engage with them—as forms of life narratives.

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NOTES

1. See Gordon, *The Color*; "A Shoelace."
2. See Komine; Kudomi.
3. See Gordon, "Inequities"; "The Crumbling."
4. In her contribution to this special issue, Shailaja Paik offers a similar methodology for the study of a marginalized group in India.
5. See Aoki; Amos.
6. See Neary.
7. See Reber.
8. See Buraku Mondai Kenkyusho; Akashi.
9. See Nabeshima, et al.
10. See Fujitani; Groemer.
11. The samurai class during this same period, who were also relieved of their prior obligations and status, received loans to supplement their income and reestablish themselves; the Burakumin did not.
12. See Hawkins.
13. See Ikeda, "Buraku"; Kiyonori.
14. See Nabeshima, "Invisible."
15. See Okuda.
16. See Executive Committee.
17. See De Vos and Wagatsuma.
18. See Sumii.
19. Throughout this essay, first names for contacts such as Mr. Ishii and all interviewees are not given in recognition of the Japanese custom of using last names in most forms of communication, even among colleagues.
20. See M. Noguchi.
21. See Shimahara; Kawamoto and Shimizu.
22. See Akashi.
23. See Y. Noguchi; M. Noguchi and Y. Noguchi.
24. See Kanegae.
25. See Shimizu.
26. See Ikeda, "Theoretical"; "Buraku."
27. See Okuda.
28. See Okuda.
29. See Gordon, "From Liberation."
30. See H. Fujita, "Education"; "Whither."
31. The idea of blood becoming thicker is a euphemism for marriage within one's own clan or caste.
32. See Buraku Kaihō Kenkyūsho.

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[3]. See Befu.
[4]. See Gordon, "From Liberation"; Nabeshima, "*Dowa* Education"; Nabeshima, "Invisible Racism."

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The idea for this special issue emerged two years ago. Since then, the two of us have exchanged hundreds of emails, collaborated on every aspect of it, and have had many spirited conversations around caste and life narratives. In this journey, we got tremendous encouragement and inspiration from many colleagues, friends, and fellow travelers. As this issue of the journal comes to fruition, we wish to offer our deep appreciation to the coeditors of *Biography* (Cynthia Franklin, Craig Howes, and John David Zuern) for their expert knowledge of life narratives, for their unstinting support at every step, and for their extreme generosity.

Biography made it possible for all the contributors to come together at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in Honolulu for an intense and enriching three-day workshop in 2016, which helped to shape the issue in profound ways. Stan Schab, senior editor, was immensely helpful in the early stages of organizing the workshop; and Anjoli Roy, the managing editor of *Biography*, has been hands on and supportive throughout, including, with John David Zuern, in casting a keen eye over the essays as they passed through copyediting. We offer all of them our warm thanks.

We also wish to acknowledge S. Charusheela, scholar and friend, who is not a contributor but who, in her enthusiasm, flew out from Seattle to participate—her thoughtful remarks and contributions were much appreciated; and Mari Yoshihara, who made time for advice at a key moment.

Finally, the contributors of this issue themselves have inspired us with their thought-provoking ideas and readings. We thank them for making this collaborative project such a pleasure and such a success.

Shankar and Charu

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CONTRIBUTORS

Shreta Majumdar Adur is an assistant professor of sociology at California State University, Los Angeles. Before this, she was as an assistant professor of women and gender studies at California State University, Fullerton. She completed her PhD in sociology from the University of Connecticut, earned a master's in international development from the University of Pittsburgh, and a master's in sociology from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research interests include gender, sexuality, human rights, and immigration. She is the coauthor of *As the Leaves Turn Gold: Asian Americans and Experiences of Aging* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), the author of several publications in peer-reviewed journals, and a contributor to edited collections.

V.S. Alone is a professor in visual studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His research interests are ancient Indian art, Ajanta caves and Buddhist caves in western India, the interpretative framework of Ambedkar, modern Indian art and popular visual culture, critics of postcolonial paradigms, neo-Buddhist visual culture, and general social sciences. Alone is currently involved in developing the conceptual formulation of "protected ignorance." He has presented research papers at national and international art history and social sciences seminars, and at conferences within India and abroad. He was nominated as an Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) chair visiting professor in Shenzhen University, China, and was also invited to be a visiting professor at Autonoma University Madrid, Spain, and Renmin University of China, Beijing. He has been engaged in popular lectures as part of social movements. Kaveri Books published his text, *Early Western Indian Buddhist Caves: Forms and Patronage* in 2016.

Tapan Basu taught at the Department of English, Hindu College, University of Delhi, for more than twenty-eight years before joining the Department of English, University of Delhi, as an associate professor. His teaching and research interests include American literature (especially African American literature) and Indian literature (especially Dalit literature). His publications include *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (coauthored, Orient Longman, 1993); *Translating Caste: A Critical Anthology of Writings on*

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Caste (edited, Katha, 2001); *Listen to the Flames: Texts and Readings from the Margins* (coedited, Oxford UP, 2016), and *Crossing Borders: Essays on Literature, Culture and Society in Honor of Amritjit Singh* (coedited, Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2017). He has received several academic awards, including a Fulbright fellowship; a South Asia Research Program fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, New York; and a fellowship at the Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies, the Open University, Milton Keynes, UK. Last year, he was a fellow at the Salzburg Global Seminar.

Sumit Baudh received his Doctor of Juridical Science (SJD) from the UCLA School of Law. He is a former research fellow of the Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies at Columbia Law School; consultant to the Arcus Foundation; University of California Human Rights Fellow; and Michael D. Palm Fellow of the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. All of these associations have contributed to formulating the ideas and content of the essay included in this volume. Sumit Baudh is currently an associate professor at the O. P. Jindal Global University in Sonipat, Haryana.

Laura R. Brueck is an associate professor of South Asian literature and culture at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. She is the author of *Writing Resistance: The Rhetorical Imagination of Hindi Dalit Literature* (Columbia UP, 2014) and has translated several short stories by Ajay Navaria in a volume called *Unclaimed Terrain* (Navayana, 2013).

Swarnavel Eswaran is an associate professor in the Departments of English and Media and Information (MI) at Michigan State University. He is a graduate of the Film and Television Institute of India and the University of Iowa. His documentaries include *Thangam* (1995), *INA* (1996), *Villu* (1997), *Unfinished Journey: A City in Transition* (2012), *Migrations of Islam* (2014), *Hmong Memory at the Crossroads* (2015), and *Nagapattinam: Waves from the Deep* (2016). His research focuses on the history, theory, and production of documentaries, the specificity of Tamil cinema, and its complex relationship with Hollywood as well as popular Hindi films. His recent books are *Cinema: Sattagamum Saalaramum* (Nizhal, 2013) and an anthology of essays on documentaries and experimental films in *Tamil and Madras Studios: Narrative, Genre, and Ideology in Tamil Cinema* (Sage Publications, 2015). His essays

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Cinematography and the Poetics of 1950s Tamil Cinema: Maruthi Rao and Visual Style," is published in the spring 2017 issue of *Screen*.

Jane A. Gordon, professor of international comparative education at the University of California, Santa Cruz, conducts ethnographic research on the impact of economic, political, and social contexts of schooling both in the US and internationally—in particular, in Japan, China, India, Southeast Asia, Bhutan, and Northern England. Her recent work has included education in various Muslim countries as well as educational change in post-Soviet regions such as the Balkans and Caucasus. She has authored four books and numerous chapters and publications related to educational access.

Charu Gupta is presently a visiting professor and ICCR Chair at the University of Vienna. She teaches in the Department of History, University of Delhi. She has been a visiting faculty member at Yale University, Washington University, and the University of Hawai'i. She has also been a fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi; the Social Science Research Council, New York; the Asian Scholarship Foundation, Thailand; the Wellcome Institute, London; and the University of Oxford. She is the author of *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (Permanent Black, 2001; Palgrave, 2002), and *The Gender of Caste: Representing Dalits in Print* (Permanent Black and U of Washington P, 2016). She is also the editor of *Gendering Colonial India: Reforms, Print, Caste and Communalism* (Orient Blackswan, 2012).

Bindu Menon is presently a fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Shimla. She teaches mass communication and journalism at Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University. She has authored essays on early film history, media studies, and music cultures in peer-reviewed journals in English and in her native language of Malayalam. She is currently at work on her book about a history of early twentieth-century cinema publics and media archaeology in South India.

Parthasarathi Muthukkaruppan teaches in the Department of Cultural Studies in the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He has completed his PhD dissertation, titled "Caste Violence in Contemporary India: Theory and History in the Field of Dalit Studies." He has published essays in various journals, including *Social Scientist*, *Economic and Political*

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Weekly, and *Critical Quarterly*. His areas of interest include cultural theory, literature, Ambedkarism, and Marxism. He can be reached at sharathisharathi@gmail.com.

Anjana Narayan is an associate professor of sociology at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Her areas of interest include ethnicity, gender, and migration. She is the coauthor of *Living Our Religions: Hindu and Muslim South Asian-American Women Narrate Their Experiences* (Kumarian Press, 2008) and coeditor of *Research Beyond Borders: Interdisciplinary Reflections* (Lexington Books, 2011). She received her doctorate in sociology from the University of Connecticut and a postgraduate degree in social work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai.

Shailaja Paik, an associate professor of history at the University of Cincinnati, is the author of *Dalit Women's Education in Modern India: Double Discrimination* (Routledge, 2014) and several articles that focus on the forging of a new Dalit womanhood in colonial Western India, the education of Dalit women, patriarchy within Dalit communities, the history and politics of naming Dalits, and building solidarity between Dalit and African American women. Her work has been funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Ford Foundation, Yale University, Emory University, the Indian Council for Social Science Research, and the Charles Phelps Taft Center, among others. She is currently on the National Endowment for the Humanities-funded American Institute of Indian Studies Long-term Senior Fellowship conducting research on her second book, which examines the politics of caste, gender, sexuality, art and aesthetics, and community and nation in popular culture in modern Maharashtra.

S. Shankar is a novelist and critic. He is the author, editor, or translator of eight books, the most recent of which is the novel *Ghost in the Tamarind* (U of Hawai'i P, 2017). His critical works relate to postcolonial literature, translation studies, and debates over World Literature, as seen in his two most recent critical essays, "Literatures of the World: An Inquiry" (*PMLA*, 2016) and "The Languages of Love: An Essay on Translation and Affect" (*Comparative Literature*, 2017). He is a professor of English at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Mukul Sharma is a Delhi-based writer specializing in environment, human rights, and media issues. Since 1984, he has worked for the Times of India Newspaper Group, Amnesty International, ActionAid International, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Climate Parliament, and the Indian Institute of

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Mass Communication (IIMC) as a journalist, development professional, and academician. Presently, he is a professor of development communication at IIMC, New Delhi. He has published several books in English and Hindi, the latest being *Green and Saffron: Hindu Nationalism and Indian Environmental Politics* (Permanent Black, 2012). His forthcoming book is *Caste and Nature: Dalits and Indian Environmental Politics* (Oxford UP, 2017). He has received twelve national and international awards for his writings on environment, labor, and human rights issues.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the first "Editor's Note" I have written for *Biography*, as the task has usually fallen to Craig Howes, who is currently making good use of a well-earned sabbatical, or to my coeditor Cindy Franklin. I'm happy to do it, as it gives me the opportunity to say what a pleasure it has been so far to serve as Acting Director of the Center for Biographical Research while Craig is away and to be more closely involved in the day-to-day operations of the Center and the journal. This is the second issue of *Biography* our new Managing Editor, Anjoli Roy, and I have seen through the production process from start to finish; the first was our special issue *Caste and Life Narratives*, which arrived from the printer just this past week. The turnaround time on that issue—less than under a year since the August 2016 workshop in Honolulu at which the contributors and guest editors Charu Gupta and S. Shankar worked together to develop its contents—is a tribute to all the participants' commitment to the project's success. We are now in the final stages of preparation for the workshop for our special issue devoted to the Movement for Black Lives, guest edited by Brittney Cooper and Treva Lindsey. These annual special-issue workshops are one of the highlights of the Center's activities, and this upcoming gathering promises to be as stimulating and productive as all the others have been.

The Center will also be welcoming three long-term visiting researchers in the coming academic year. Qingbiao Liang, who teaches at the Jiangxi Normal University in Nanching City, China, and coedits the *Journal of Modern Life Writing Studies*, will be spending a year with us to pursue a project on political philosophy and national identity as reflected in autobiographical writing. Recently retired from Youngstown State University in Ohio, Gail Okawa will be working on a book about Japanese internment in Hawai'i during the Second World War. Yoshiro Sakamoto comes to us from the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and will be researching the lives and work of prominent twentieth-century poets and artists in Hawai'i, including Ștefan Baciu and Jean Charlot, for the next two years. In addition to these scholars, we look forward to hosting several other visitors for shorter stays. The opportunity to exchange ideas with dynamic scholars from around the world has been one of the many perks of my association with the Center.

Copyediting and proofreading for an interdisciplinary journal with a broadly international focus has brought me another kind of joy: the small, sometimes surprising, sometimes even delightful discoveries about how Eng-

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lish works. Time-consuming as it can be, pondering the fine nuances of denotation, the possibilities and risks of connotation, and the subtle interactions between logic and syntax has paid off in a deeper appreciation for the richness of the linguistic resources at our disposal and, as often happens, in an enhanced admiration for the dexterity with which contributors to *Biography* are tapping them. Working with translations, as we often do, adds a layer of complexity to these issues. By chance, this issue of the journal brings together three essays that deal with material in languages other than English. Sam Ferguson reflects on the emergence of the genres of autobiography and the *journal intime* in eighteenth-century France, Kathryn Sederberg analyzes a diverse selection of diaries German citizens kept during the final years of the Second World War, and Meliz Ergin examines Jacques Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other* as an occasion for exploring intersections among autobiography and philosophy, subjectivity and language, and identity and writing in Derrida's thought. As we worked through these fine essays, Anjoli and I sometimes paused to consider how best to accommodate material in the original language the authors wanted to include while optimizing the accessibility of the articles for all readers. Every academic editor faces these challenges, but because at *Biography* we are aiming to step up our longstanding commitment to linguistic diversity and international scope, these small-scale editorial considerations are feeding into larger plans for more extensive representation of scholarship in other languages. Our annual International Year in Review, which launched in our Fall 2016 issue, makes one step toward this goal by inviting authors to contribute essays in whatever language they think will make their reviews most valuable for their particular audiences.

It seems fitting to me that an issue made up of articles focused on texts in German and French, including a study of Derrida, should also feature two tributes to Barbara Harlow, who passed away in January of this year and whose influential contributions to the study of life writing in connection with political struggle and human rights will be familiar to many of our readers. An accomplished comparatist and translator, Barbara worked on sources in several languages in the course of her career—among them German, French, Spanish, Italian, and Arabic—and translated a number of important texts, including Derrida's *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, criticism by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, and short stories by the Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani. In this issue Laura E. Lyons and S. Shankar, both of whom earned their doctoral degrees under Barbara's direction at the University of Texas at Austin, offer accounts of Barbara's engagement with life writing from the perspective of

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scholars whose own work has been shaped by her critical imagination. As a member of the same cohort of UT-Austin graduate students, I was fortunate to have been a student in one of Barbara's seminars on literary theory, and even that small dose of her brilliance as a scrupulously close reader of an astonishingly wide range of texts has had lasting benefits. I want to thank both Laura and Shankar for sharing their thoughts about Barbara with us, and I join them in saying farewell to a deeply respected and inspiring teacher.

John David Zuern

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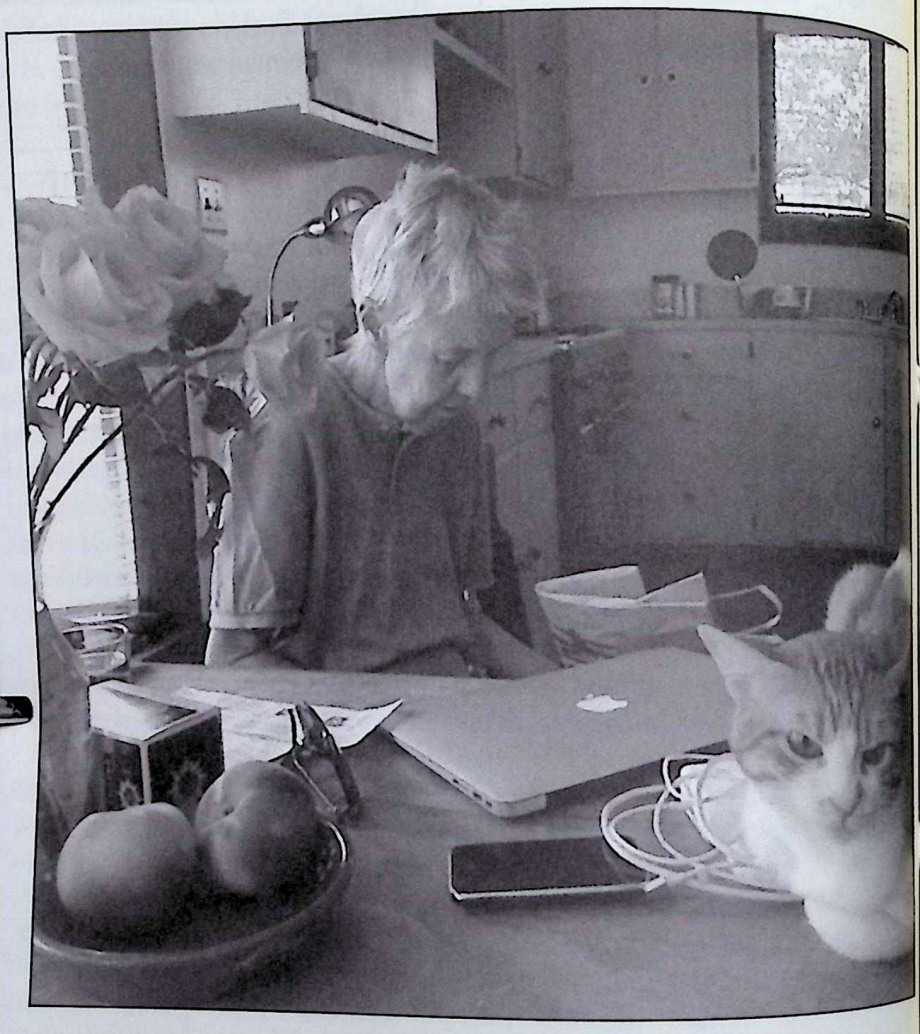
REMEMBERING BARBARA HARLOW
(1948–2017)



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BARBARA HARLOW
A REMEMBRANCE VIA CONFERENCES, READINGS, AND QUESTIONS

LAURA E. LYONS

The task of remembering Barbara Harlow is not easy for many reasons, not least among them that she was both formative and formidable to so many, as an example of a committed scholar and colleague, and most certainly as an exacting teacher. For her former students (like Shankar, John Zuern, and me), Barbara's insistence on a particular kind of historicizing is a critical lesson that undoubtedly marks both our scholarship and our teaching. What she meant by historicizing involved many things. It was not just a matter of what she called "vulgar empiricism"—the who, what, when, and where of history, all of which she felt were the least any scholar could do—but also of tracking how the pressing questions of a given time were registered in different venues, whether those be in written documents like novels, poems, or trade treaties, or in other arenas like conferences or courts. She thought a great deal about how those questions reemerge and change across time or are forgotten. In other words, Barbara had an uncanny ability to correlate academic and political formations, both to see them as critically engaged with each other rather than as separate realms and to imagine their mutual transformation. If people associate her with political readings of literature, a description far too simplistic for what she wrote, it is also the case that she frequently trained her close reading skills on other forms of writing and, in the process, revealed the figures, leitmotifs, reversals, recognitions, and plot twists that define politics.

I want to remember Barbara Harlow by recalling where many of *Biography*'s readers might have encountered her for the first time: the IABA 2008 Conference on Life Writing and Translations held in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Even now at other IABAs, we still hear people offering props to Cynthia G. Franklin, Miriam Fuchs, Craig Howes, and Stan Schab for a conference experience in which each element, from papers and keynotes to food and music, elaborated the conference focus on "Life Writing and Translations." Barbara was an excellent choice for one of the keynotes; she was herself a translator of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (*Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*) and the Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani (*Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*),

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to name two of the translations she is particularly known for, and her own work often concerned the lives and writing of those in liberation movements. *After Lives: Legacies of Revolutionary Writing* focused, for example, on three writers—Roque Dalton of El Salvador, Ghassan Kanafani of Palestine, and Ruth First of South Africa—who had been assassinated for their activism.

Barbara's keynote at IABA returned to Ruth First, South African communist and anti-apartheid activist, and was in many respects an extension of an article she wrote for a 2002 special issue of this journal titled *Biography and Geography*, edited by Miriam Fuchs. In that article, "Redlined Africa: Ruth First's *Barrel of a Gun*," Barbara offers a reading of First's 1970 book (republished in the United States as *Power in Africa*) as "intellectual history . . . a story that necessarily combines both biography and bibliography" (151–52), one that "proposes a study of coups in Africa, with special reference to the Sudan, Nigeria, and Ghana, and provides a chapter in the life of Ruth First and her own contributions to the 'liberation of Africa'" (152).

The relationship between the intellectual histories of revolutionary movements and the individuals within them was a primary point of intersection between Barbara's work and life writing. In the early 1990s, the course packets for her seminars on "Strategies of Theory in the Third World" and "Third World Feminisms" noticeably lacked the kinds of theories popular in postcolonial studies then and now. Rather, these courses primarily focused on the writings of those within resistance movements. Eschewing an international division of labor that would render the writings of those involved in national liberation struggles as the raw material through which privileged, first-world intellectuals could make their arguments, if not their names, Barbara instead favored a way of reading that took seriously the intellectual traditions that contributed to those movements and that understood the history of ideas behind revolutions, like the political ends struggled for, as something not fixed but rather continuously in need of negotiation. Even a text like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (one of the only conventionally identifiable theoretical texts on our syllabi) Barbara scrupulously read as an intellectual memoir.

At that IABA 2008, Barbara's keynote again braided the biography and bibliography of Ruth First. "Tortured Thoughts: From Marshall Square to Guantánamo Bay," later published in the special issue of *Biography* dedicated to the conference, coedited by Cynthia G. Franklin and Miriam Fuchs, revolves around a tight cluster of questions that Barbara poses early on: "Was Ruth First in 1982 a 'legitimate target' for apartheid's politically motivated assassins? Was she ever 'tortured' during her 117 days of detention in 1963? Who cared anyway? And why? Why care now?" (27). The last of these not

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entirely rhetorical questions is partially answered in the way that she reads First's account of her detention alongside Moazzam Begg's memoir *Enemy Combatant*. Reading the structures of their different scenes of interrogation, Barbara suggested, can be

> instructive perhaps in reconsidering the contemporary issues facing the "humanities" as both academic discipline and intellectual tradition—what might have been, might even now be, indeed might yet become, productive methods towards a renewed politics of response and resistance, the paradoxes and conundrums of living and working in an "age of torture." (27)

Barbara's address resonated with both of the other keynote presentations. Alice Partnoy, whose book *The Little School: Tales of Disappearance and Survival* often appeared on Barbara's syllabi in the early 1990s, spoke in her keynote about the real challenges that the victims of state terrorism, like her and many of her comrades during Argentina's "Dirty Wars," face when telling their stories. Partnoy talked movingly of the necessity of building a discourse of solidarity and a method of "co/labor/actions" so that those who have survived torture at the hands of the state might offer their expertise to and advocate for other victims in their home and elsewhere.

Barbara's focus on intellectual histories and her insistence that the death by letter bomb of Ruth First still mattered over twenty-five years later also articulated with Kanaka Maoli scholar Noenoe Silva, whose own keynote involved the creation of what she called "bio-bibliographies" of two important Hawaiian intellectuals, Joseph H. Kānepu'u and Joseph Mokuohai Poepoe. Barbara used the term in the published version of her talk on Ruth First and torture, stating "I share this term 'bio-bibliography' with Noenoe Silva in attempting to think through the parameters of intellectual biography, not just 'life writing,' but a 'writing life' as well" (41n1). Ruth First and issues of state violence continued to be at the center of Barbara's "writing life" for several decades, through visiting professorships and research trips to England and South Africa for a manuscript whose publication will unfortunately be posthumous.

117 Days, First's memoir of her detention in 1963, was one of the final readings for a course on "Writing and Political Detention" that I took from Barbara in 1991. I remember her lingering over a passage in Albie Sachs's foreword to the Monthly Review Press edition. In it, Sachs relays how although Ruth First was "physically uneasy about her own participation in the singing and dancing at meetings and unable to take part in the banter in African languages," her discomfort "in no way inhibited her activity as a thinker, organizer, educator and writer in the movement" (9). Ruth First was emblematic of the kind of solidarity I think Barbara most respected, neither a

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giving up of privilege, nor a preservation of it, but rather a mobilization of resources and access to forward ideas much bigger than one's individual contribution. "However uneasy she might have been," I recall her saying of Ruth First, "she stood there." Barbara herself "stood there" among many different activist groups participating in rallies and protests from Northern Ireland to Austin and in solidarity with people from Palestine, El Salvador, and Iraq, to name a few.

But Barbara also had a remarkable capacity to just be with people, "to hang out" as she liked to say. Between sessions at that IABA, she could be found hanging out on the lanai of the Imin Center sharing cigarettes with younger scholars, mostly from parts of the world that interested her. She would ask them about their work, families, what they were reading, or engage them in friendly banter about the politics of their homes, whether institutional or geographic. Not one for small talk, she had the incredible ability to befriend someone over the course of a couple of cigarettes and to continue such friendships over email. The need for nicotine, she once slyly told me, provides its own form of solidarity.

Barbara Harlow's work has had an important place in the pages of this journal. She, among others, initiated a turn toward human rights that has become particularly prominent in life writing. And yet, her work exists in a somewhat agonistic relationship to this field. Barbara was one of the contributors to the special issue *Life Writing and Corporate Personhood* that Purnima Bose and I coedited. We were delighted that Barbara wanted to contribute a piece on the Israeli occupation of Palestine, particularly since Palestine had always been central to her own intellectual formation and thinking even as her comparativist training meant that she also wrote about many other places. When the participants of the issue workshopped her draft article on the case of *Corrie et al. v. Caterpiller*, Barbara had more material than could fit in this one essay. She was interested in probing the possibilities and limitations of adjudicating the death of the American coed Rachel Corrie, and the "et al." named in the lawsuit, who were the Palestinians, less known in the United States, who all had been killed by Israeli soldiers on Caterpiller bulldozers during home demolitions in the Gaza Strip.

Some participants suggested that the cleanest way through the material would be to focus on life writing, to tell the stories in relation to more information on those unnamed Palestinians. While her analysis was in the service of putting pressure on the relegation of the Palestinians to that "et al." in the legal documents pertaining to the case, Barbara was also concerned about how quick we were to suggest the political efficacy of "giving voice" to the victims of human rights violations, and particularly dead Palestinians. She offered Israeli intellectual and forensic architect Eyal Weizman's critique in

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is book *The Lesser of Two Evils* that human rights testimony is often far less effective in courts than forensic evidence. Too frequently, Weizman argues, rather than take the risk of making political claims on behalf of others in the interest of change, such humanitarian projects make giving voice to victims as an end in itself and so knowingly enact a kind of "minimal humanitarianism" that merely sustains those lives. The discussion seemed at first counterintuitive to many, including—I should admit—to me.

That discussion, I realize now, speaks to Barbara's contribution to life writing, namely her willingness to ask the difficult questions of her own work: "What difference, in concrete, material ways does this project make? Does it effect discursary change, and/or work toward, or potentially hinder, needed political transformation?" Doing so for her was not a matter of self-indulgent talk about how limited our reach as scholars is, but quite the opposite, to unsparingly consider the ways human rights work, whether carried out by academics or those in nongovernmental organizations, often backfire and can even work to perpetuate, rather than to stem, state-sanctioned terrorism, of the kind enacted by the Israeli state or the US legal system. The article that emerged is not easy to read because it stages multiple interpretations of the case against Caterpiller. Barbara ends by imagining what a divestment campaign against the equipment company might look like, a campaign that would not disavow testimony but that would put it in the service of "challenging both corporate dereliction and hegemonic disregard for human rights abuses, in the courtroom, in the boardroom, and in the corridors of power, to rebuild Palestinian homes and hopes" (243). Those of us in life writing might take away from that point, and indeed from Barbara Harlow's scholarship and politics, the difficult but necessary work of comprehending the stakes of what we do and the value of being uncompromising.

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REMEMBERING BARBARA HARLOW
RESISTANCE AND LIFE WRITING

S. SHANKAR

Barbara Harlow was not a life writing scholar but she was a scholar of life writing. What I mean by this is that Barbara did not situate her work primarily in the field of life writing. Rather, she located it in Ethnic and Third World Studies—to invoke the name of the concentration she helped found in the Department of English at the University of Texas at Austin, where she taught for most of her career. At the same time, a regard for life writing genres is evident everywhere in her work—the book she was working on when she died was a biography of South African radical Ruth First; before that came the book *After Lives: Legacies of Revolutionary Writing*; and an entire chapter is devoted to life writing in *Resistance Literature*, her first published book. In that chapter, devoted to prison memoirs, she writes: "These memoirs are to be distinguished too from conventional autobiography inasmuch as the narratives are actively engaged in a re-definition of the self and the individual in terms of a collective enterprise and struggle" (120). So much of her critical work on life writing espouses the spirit of this statement.

Struggle—first and last, life writing was for Barbara a pathway to politics, more particularly, the politics of the wretched of the earth. Life writing texts have often—that is, not inevitably—played a significant role in bearing witness to the disregarded lives of the marginalized. She was not the first to understand this, but she was among the first to intuit that a literary notion of life writing could and should be expanded to include genres not conventionally regarded as life writing, thus drawing a wide array of texts into the purview of literature and English departments. Barbara was no respecter of disciplinary boundaries, and she understood that life writing texts, much more than the novel or the lyric poem, straddle disciplines. Through them, she reached for research material in non-literary areas while continuing to exercise her considerable powers of reading and literary analysis.

You can see this clearly, for example, in the final chapter of *Barred: Women, Writing and Detention*, which is entitled "Writing Human Rights." The chapter is anchored by non-canonical life writing genres (human rights reports and survivor accounts of torture). Barbara does not call these documents life

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writing, nor is she interested in "theorizing" them in that mode. Barbara preferred to orient her scholarly work through a more practical understanding of politics. She concludes the chapter (and *Barred*) by noting that "the struggle against torture and the opposition to censorship are at once social and political movements, entailing new research imperatives and alternative archives" (256). It seems evident to me that life writing genres are essential to Barbara in this scholarly imperative, in this rethinking of archives.

The argument could be made that of all literary genres, life writing—born of the artifice of make-believe—is the closest to a politics in the raw. Yet, life writing is no less composed—artistically designed—than a novel and, if anything, it is dangerous to approach life writing with a kind of naïve sincerity best reserved (if at all) for direct experience. Still, life writing promises us something that a novel cannot. It promises an embodied life, or a portion of such a life, and there is no point in pretending that readers do not turn to life writing in the expectation that the promise will be fulfilled in some measure. This is the reason life writing has been at the heart of many political campaigns from the abolition of slavery (slave narratives) to anticaste agitation (Dalit memoirs)—or, to return to Barbara, campaigns for human rights and against torture.

Over the years, Barbara published three essays in *Biography*—one on Palestine and the other two on Ruth First and South Africa. In these essays you find the quality that I have identified above—a recourse to life writing genres to explore political realities. Taken together, the essays also indicate Barbara's unabashed "internationalism," her invigorating commitment to social and political solidarity with Palestinians and black South Africans, or indeed some other group elsewhere. Her work ranges over many geographical locations and it does so without embarrassment because there is a sense always of the interconnection of struggles across the globe. There is a broadminded sense of solidarity here, the kind of solidarity she recognized in Edward Said. In her tribute to him on his death, Barbara mourned his passing but also affirmed "the vital and vivid . . . importance of comrades-in-arms . . . reinforcing and rearticulating" what she called "lines of struggle" (4). Barbara's expansive imagination of political work did not allow her to truncate these lines of struggle, to chop them up into yours and mine. Her comrades-in-arms were everywhere though they were not everyone.

Soon after Barbara died I wrote a blog in her memory ("The Word Is Resistance"). I wrote it not only because she was my teacher but because I admired her, most especially her passionate committed self. As I said in that blog, Barbara was fierce. Because of that fierceness it was easy to forget the ba- the compassion that underlay her politics. After all, she was not fierce on her

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own behalf—solidarity is the fierceness you feel on behalf of others. Barbara understood the role life writing genres could play in such a politics of fierceness, which is why she turned repeatedly to them. Life writing studies could do worse than continue to learn from her the proper stakes of critical work.

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WHY DOES LIFE WRITING TALK ABOUT SCIENCE? FOUCAULT, ROUSSEAU, AND THE EARLY *JOURNAL INTIME*

SAM FERGUSON

Among all the discourses that practitioners of life writing adopt—from fiction, poetry, journalism, politics, and historiography, to mention just a few—the use of discourses from the natural sciences poses a particular problem for the reader. It is easy to appreciate the direct application to life writing of psychology, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, or other fields that possess their own conception of the self and its place in the world, but when an author employs terms from biology or meteorology or optics, we are necessarily faced with a more metaphorical use of language. Should this writing strategy be considered a superficial matter of presentation, perhaps as an attempt to garner some of the prestige of the natural sciences for genres of writing that have often been treated with suspicion? Or do these discourses have the potential to provide their own insights and methodological tools for the writer of, for example, autobiography or the diary? And does the particular choice of a scientific discipline merely reflect changing fashions (just as genetics and cognitive science have most recently attained a wide public awareness), or do these different discourses have their own distinct implications for the nature of the self? In an attempt to answer these questions, I shall focus on the use of scientific models over the period when autobiography emerged as a literary genre in France with the publication of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* in 1782, and when the particular diary form of the *journal intime* gradually came into being.[1] I shall argue that an affinity between life writing and scientific discourses has persisted because the emergence of literary life writing was originally connected to a deep, "archaeological" shift (to borrow Michel Foucault's term) in the foundations of human knowledge. Furthermore, the two genres of autobiography and the *journal intime* can be seen to occupy a privileged position among the many forms of life writing, in that they represent two diametrically opposed approaches to an epistemology of the self.

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My analysis will be based on readings of autobiographical texts by Rousseau and others who subsequently wrote in this same tradition, followed by an inquiry into the disparate influences that Pierre Maine de Biran reconciles in the *journal intime* he wrote between 1811 and 1824. However, I will first outline two different perspectives on the historical transformations of the late eighteenth century that contributed to a rapid growth in forms of life writing at this time. The first is Foucault's contention, set out in the 1966 work *The Order of Things*, that history is punctuated by certain shifts in a society's *episteme*, or the fundamental epistemological system that makes knowledge (and specific disciplines and discourses of knowledge) possible at any particular time. Foucault identifies "two great discontinuities in the *episteme* of Western culture: the first inaugurates the Classical age (roughly half-way through the seventeenth century) and the second, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, marks the beginning of the modern age" (xxiv). It is the second epistemological shift that is of immediate interest for the question of the relation between life writing and scientific discourses. According to Foucault, whereas the *episteme* of the Classical age was dominated by a theory of representation and by systems of atemporal classifications, in our modernity "a profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things, isolates and defines them in their own coherence, imposes upon them the forms of order implied by the continuity of time" (xxv). This modernity is also marked by the emergence of man, or the person, at the center of the field of knowledge, and the concomitant rise of "all the chimeras of the new humanisms, all the facile solutions of an 'anthropology' understood as a universal reflection on man, half-empirical, half-philosophical" (xxv).

The emergent forms of life writing at this time can easily be considered as examples of this "half-empirical, half-philosophical" reflection, but it is also important to remember that this inquiry is concerned with *literary* life writing: however difficult it might be to define the term "literature," it is the fact of belonging to this distinct cultural field that makes life writing's use of scientific discourses both unexpected and problematic. Yet to make matters more complex, the very concept of literature seems to be implicated in the same historical transformation. Ann Jefferson examines this problem in depth in her 2007 work, *Biography and the Question of Literature in France* (the second of the two historical perspectives mentioned above), which takes as its starting point "the simple historical fact that in French, as in all other major European languages, the terms 'literature' and 'biography' share a common birthdate in the eighteenth century" (1). Jefferson traces the tangled history of these two historically relative concepts, in which "literature" appears principally as a form of self-questioning about its own nature, which has been

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invited repeatedly through contact with the diverse forms of biography (the term "biography" is used here in a broad sense that can largely be equated with "life writing"). She attributes particular importance to Rousseau's *Confessions* as the first manifestation of literature in the modern sense of the word, and in this respect she echoes the much earlier conviction of Maurice Blanchot, who wrote in 1958 that Rousseau "helps literature to become aware of itself by disengaging itself from old conventions and forming, through argumentation and contradiction, a new rectitude" (41).

Clearly, various critical perspectives, besides Foucault's, have been used to examine the radical social, cultural, and historical changes that took place over this same period. For example, Alain Girard's work of 1963, *Le Journal intime*, focuses on the changing notion of the "person," building on the sociological work of Marcel Mauss.[2] However, Foucault's concept of the *episteme* is particularly useful for addressing the question at hand, not only because it directly concerns the epistemological basis that connects life writing and the natural sciences, but also because it provides a framework for distinguishing between the "archaeological" conditions for knowledge and the more proximate causes for the forms and discourses employed in an individual text (such as changing intellectual fashions or the individual experiences of the author). I shall therefore proceed by exploring the epistemological foundations of autobiographies, then of *journaux intimes*, and in both cases I shall provide some brief examples from the later history of these forms to demonstrate the continuities that exist on the "archaeological" level, despite the considerable variation in these forms over time. These two forms can be seen to espouse two diametrically opposed and yet complementary conceptions of a project for scientific knowledge of the self (however much their realization might diverge from the ideal). These two attitudes contribute to an essential ambivalence in life writing in general, and to the great capacity of life writing for reinventing its various genres and practices.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

To understand the epistemological underpinning of Rousseau's *Confessions*, we must first appreciate its specificity as the founding work of the modern autobiographical tradition in France. To this end, it will be useful to refer to the working definition of autobiography that Philippe Lejeune establishes in his 1971 work *L'Autobiographie en France*: "Let us call autobiography the retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (10, translation mine). Several aspects of this definition distinguish autobiography from the forms that preceded it (and continued to be

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produced). In memoirs, an author takes on the role of a witness or actor in public affairs, whereas the focus of autobiography is on the inner life and personality of the author (this is consistent with the new focus on the person as an object of knowledge in itself). Autobiography is not a written self-portrait since it depicts the self in its gradual formation over time (which again reflects the new understanding that an object of knowledge is defined by its historicity). Finally, the act of producing a narrative account of one's own existence is not merely a process of responding to an established questionnaire or applying a code that would be equally relevant to any given individual, but rather it is necessary for every individual to invent the form and writing project that is appropriate to their own experience. With astonishing frequency, authors of autobiographies set out the specific aims and methods of their project and their commitment to relate to the reader their own specific conception of the truth, in passages that Lejeune terms "autobiographical pacts."[3] My inquiry will therefore be concerned principally with the terms of these autobiographical pacts without pursuing the question of whether their aims are in fact achieved in the project's execution.

The opening words of the definitive text of the *Confessions* are well known above all for their ambition, or even arrogance: "I am forming an undertaking which has no precedent, and the execution of which will have no imitator whatsoever. I wish to show my fellows a man in all the truth of nature; and this man will be myself" (5).[4] The aim to depict an (implicitly representative) man in "all the truth of nature" is certainly in keeping with the epistemological shift described above, but the nature of Rousseau's project is explained more clearly and in more explicitly scientific terms in an autobiographical pact that appears in the earlier "Neuchâtel manuscript" but was not included in the first published editions:

> I have often remarked that, even among those who pride themselves the most for knowing men, each hardly knows anyone but himself, if it is even true that anyone knows himself; for how can a being be defined by means of the relationships that are inside itself alone, without being compared with anything? Nevertheless, this imperfect knowledge that one has of oneself is the only means one uses for knowing others. . . .
>
> Based on these considerations, I have resolved to cause my readers to make an additional step in the knowledge of men by pulling them away, if possible, from that unique and faulty rule of always judging someone else's heart by means of their own; whereas, on the contrary, even to know one's own it would often be necessary to begin by reading in someone else's. In order for one to learn to evaluate oneself, I want to attempt to provide at least one item for comparison, so that each can know himself and one other, and this other will be myself. (585)

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It is worth following the logic of this passage in detail. First, Rousseau begins from the premise that there exists a true self, which is "the hidden and often very complicated internal cause" of the external appearances of human behavior (586, translation modified). It is difficult to understand the sum of internal relationships that make up one's own self, but even if one were to succeed in comprehending this system, it would be a mistake to assume that the same system governs and explains the self of other individuals. Rousseau's project therefore aims to provide a second specimen for our understanding, which will allow us to extrapolate a broader system, a knowledge of the functioning of the self in general, which could in turn be used to understand the individual case. Rousseau continues by saying that an individual self can only be understood in its totality, by following "what chain of secret affections have made it the way it is" (586). He finds that Montaigne—who might otherwise be viewed as a possible model for Rousseau's project—was "falsely sincere" since he portrayed himself incompletely, "in a good likeness but in profile" (586, translation mine). In contrast to this partial and therefore false sincerity, he insists, "if I keep silent about something one will not know me at all, so much does everything depend on everything else, so much is everything one in my character, and so much does this bizarre and peculiar assemblage need all the circumstances of my life to be well unveiled" (589, translation modified). It goes without saying that Rousseau's *Confessions* constitutes a secular examination of conscience (in contrast to the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, to which Rousseau's title alludes), and that his effort to create a portrait of his soul is not for the benefit of God or of his confessor, but for the delayed judgment of posterity.[5]

We can characterize this attitude as a gesture of totalization, which is always present in an autobiographical project to a certain degree, even if it is evoked only as a utopian ideal. I shall provide two examples of later autobiographers who adopt this totalizing gesture, and who do so in an explicitly scientific language. As mentioned earlier, the connection with these later texts exists primarily on the "archaeological" level, while the more immediate causes for their use of a scientific discourse may be very different. The first example is taken from Nicolas-Edme Restif de la Bretonne (1734–1806), who worked as a printer until, from 1767, he began to publish prolifically in numerous genres, including the novel (particularly erotic fiction and observations of social mores), theater, and essays on social reform and pedagogy. He began the composition of his major autobiographical work, *Monsieur Nicolas ou le cœur-humain dévoilé* (Monsieur Nicolas, or, The Human Heart Laid Bare), in 1783 (the first part of Rousseau's *Confessions* was published in 1782) and it was first put on sale between 1794 and 1797. *Monsieur Nicolas* clearly

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owes a large debt to Rousseau's *Confessions*, but it is also far more novelistic both in its style and its liberty with factual details, especially in its extensive accounts of Restif's sexual exploits. Nonetheless, the autobiographical pact of this work makes a virtue of being more scientific in its approach than Rousseau had been:

> For my own project, precision and sincerity are absolutely essential, since I must dissect the human heart according to my own consciousness, and plumb the depths of the *self*. I am not undertaking my own *Confessions*; I am *revealing* the *Mechanics of the Human Heart*. Let Nicolas-Edme disappear from view, so that Man alone will remain! . . .
>
> Dear reader . . . I ask only that you should not judge me at every instant, but only after reading everything in its entirety. I am presenting you with a Book of natural history, which places me above Buffon. (4–8, translation mine)

We can see clearly some of the same principles that were found in Rousseau's *Confessions*: the individual case is examined with a view to a broader understanding of humanity, and a given self must be understood in its totality. However, instead of Rousseau, Restif de la Bretonne identifies himself with George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, a writer and researcher of broad scientific interests, translator of Stephen Hales and Isaac Newton, and who published his own *Histoire Naturelle* between 1749 and 1789, a vast and, indeed, totalizing project to gather knowledge spanning all fields of the natural sciences.

A second example, much closer to our own age, is the writer and philosopher Julien Benda, best known for his essay of 1927 *Trahison des clercs* (Betrayal of the Intellectuals), in which he argues for a role of *clerc* (intellectual) as an upholder of universal values such as justice, truth, and above all, reason. His autobiography, *La Jeunesse d'un clerc* (Childhood of an Intellectual), claims to relate how Benda became an intellectual of this sort and presents his autobiographical project as follows:

> I believe that, in a certain human family that runs throughout all of history and has played some role within it—let us call this family, schematically, the proponents of an absolute idealism—I am just about a perfect case. I have been impelled to write this book by the desire to offer the psychologist a slightly exaggerated description of this specimen. It is an exercise in erudition. I would like to deposit in the annals of the science of Man a thorough account of a certain human type. I am bequeathing my skull to the museum, with notes on its structure. (7, translation mine)

It is not surprising in itself that Benda, who views scientific rationality and rigor as ideals for all intellectual work, would describe his project in scientific terms, but it is more striking that the basic epistemological model remains largely unchanged from Rousseau and Restif. We can see the same logic here

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by which a full account of the individual, which the autobiographer supposedly provides, will contribute to a more universal understanding of the self or of humanity in general. The words *un peu poussée* (slightly exaggerated) suggest a degree of irony toward these scientific aims, which might seem all the more naïve since the advent of Freudian psychoanalysis (which casts doubt on the knowability of the unconscious), but Benda nonetheless insists on his hope "to be read by certain men of science, even if they have no affection for me" (7). The point is not just that discourses from the natural sciences continued to be used in autobiographical texts—there are of course many examples that do not use these discourses[6]—but that there remains a connection on an "archaeological" level with the epistemology of Rousseau's *Confessions*, and which is distinct (as we shall see) from that of the *journal intime*.

THE JOURNAL INTIME

The *journal intime* undoubtedly owes its emergence to some of the same factors that gave rise to the earliest works of autobiography, including the shift toward the modern *episteme*, yet its use of scientific models is very different. Whereas autobiography is associated with an attempt to know the self in its entirety, in its gradual constitution over time, the *journal intime* is characterized instead by a process of observing the self in its endless variation and instability, a process that renounces any totalizing synthesis. However, in seeking to compare autobiography and the *journal intime* from this era, we are faced with the problem that the origins of the latter are considerably more obscure.[7] By its very nature, the *journal intime* was generally written and kept in private, and it was only in the nineteenth century that a practice gradually became established of publishing an author's *journaux intimes* after their death. My own approach to this problem is to examine one of the earliest examples of a full-fledged *journal intime* that reflects at length on its own literary heritage: the diary of the philosopher and mathematician Pierre Maine de Biran, written briefly in 1794 and 1795, then far more consistently between 1811 and 1825, and first published in 1857.[8] This text is particularly useful for the matter at hand, since Maine de Biran comments on two very different influences, each of them conceived in scientific terms, which he manages to reconcile within his writing project: on the one hand, the plans that Rousseau adumbrated—but never executed in his lifetime—for a process of writing the self that would be far more fragmentary than his autobiographical texts; and on the other hand, the incredibly complex system set out by Marc-Antoine Julien for maintaining an *emploi du temps* (agenda), a system that aims to bring forth and control a new, more efficient citizen for the new Republic in the wake of the French Revolution.

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Maine de Biran refers repeatedly in his *journal intime* to a project conceived but then abandoned by Rousseau, which he had described in his *Confessions*, and to which he gave the title "*Sensitive Morality*, or *The Wise Man's Materialism*" (344, translation modified). According to Maine de Biran, "it concerns the variations that men experience in the course of their existence and which often make them so dissimilar to themselves that they seem to be transformed into different men" (qtd. in Girard 60, translation mine). Not only is the self endlessly variable, but it is also considered to be a part of the physical world, and so Rousseau undertook to study the relationship between the state of his soul and its material circumstances. He describes the principle as follows in the *Confessions*:

> Climates, seasons, sounds, colors, darkness, light, the elements, food, noise, silence, motion, rest, all act on our machine and consequently on our soul; all offer us a thousand almost guaranteed holds for governing in their origin the feelings by which we let ourselves be dominated. (343)

This observation allows us to glimpse a possible writing project consisting of a regular notation of the self, modeled above all on the science of meteorology (since the self, or soul, is imagined as being essentially vaporous or cloudy),[3] with the intention of producing a greater mastery of ourselves. But for a more practical description of a daily writing practice, we should look to *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, which Rousseau presented as an appendix to his *Confessions*. In the first "reverie," Rousseau finds himself "alone on earth" (3), entirely cut off from society and the outside world, and in this unusual degree of isolation he proposes to examine his own self by the following means:

> These pages will, properly speaking, be only a shapeless diary of my reveries. There will be much concerning me in them, because a solitary person who reflects is necessarily greatly preoccupied with himself. Moreover, all the foreign ideas which pass through my head while I am walking will also find their place in them. I will say what I have thought just as it came to me and with as little connection as the ideas of the day before ordinarily have with those of the following day. But a new understanding of my natural temperament and disposition will come from that all the same by means of a new understanding of the feelings and thoughts which constitute the daily fodder of my mind in the strange state I am in. . . .
>
> I will perform on myself, to a certain extent, the measurements natural scientists perform on the air in order to know its daily condition. I will apply the barometer to my soul, and these measurements, carefully executed and repeated over a long period of time, may furnish me results as certain as theirs. But I do not extend my enterprise that far. I will be content to keep a record of the measurements without seeking to reduce them to a system. (7–8)

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In fact, rather than a process of examination, it would be more accurate to say that Rousseau aims for a transcription of his own thoughts, without selection or interpretation. In practice, this transcription of the self is not possible in any absolute sense, and, what is more, there is a serious contradiction between the act of renouncing interpretation and the hope that a new knowledge of the self will emerge from these daily records. It is not surprising that the *Reveries*, in their realization, do not in fact resemble a *journal intime*, but as a certain ideal of fragmentary, objective writing about the self it nonetheless persists as an influence on Maine de Biran's *journal intime*.

The interests of Marc-Antoine Jullien (1775–1848), the second major influence on Maine de Biran's writing project, are very different from Rousseau's enthusiasm for introspection and demonstrate yet another aspect of the far-reaching epistemological shift taking place over these decades.[10] At a young age, between 1793 and 1794, Jullien played an important role in the Revolutionary government, was then arrested after the death of Robespierre, and later accompanied Napoleon's campaigns in Italy (1796) and Egypt (1798–1801). Despite this recovery in Jullien's fortunes and his marginal role in subsequent historical developments, Lejeune's assessment of him is as a man of the Revolution who failed in his political ambitions and dedicated himself instead to the pedagogical problem of educating and controlling a new breed of citizen for a modern, democratic, rapidly industrializing country ("Marc-Antoine Jullien" 104–05). The result of this work was published in 1808 as *Essai sur la méthode qui a pour objet l'emploi du temps, meilleur moyen d'être heureux* (Essay on a Method Aiming at Improving the Use of Time, The Best Way to Be Happy), and from 1813 one could purchase books to be filled in while applying Jullien's system to one's own life. While the system undoubtedly borrows a great deal from scientific practices of observation and analysis, Jullien also makes a concerted effort to take on the prestige of the most important fields of scientific and technological endeavor at this time. For example, he claims that an individual who applies his system will have at his disposal a "moral thermometer," a "moral watch," a "moral compass," a "moral spring," and a "moral panorama" (qtd. in Lejeune, "Marc-Antoine Jullien" 120–21). The thermometer recalls Rousseau's allusions to meteorology (and this is a recurrent theme in subsequent *journaux intimes*), but the watch and the compass should bring to mind that the thriving maritime trade and exploration of the colonial powers had been given an even greater impetus by the invention of the marine chronometer by John Harrison in 1773. This invention was itself made possible by the rapid developments in mechanical science, to which the "moral spring" alludes. The panorama refers to a quasi-photographic process of painting that aims to create a precise

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and comprehensive 360-degree reproduction of a landscape (the word "panorama" is first attested in French in 1799, which was the year in which Pierre Prévost displayed the first panoramas seen in France).

The system can be summarized as follows: one must maintain three forms of diary at the same time. The *Mémorial analytique, ou Journal des faits et observations* (Analytical Memorial, or Journal of Facts and Observations) is the closest to a *journal intime*, allowing a reflection on any subject, accompanied by a system for indexing these entries. The second diary, an *Agenda général, ou Livret pratique d'emploi du temps* (General Diary, or Practical Record of the Use of Time), comprises a detailed account of the occupations and events of each day, and five columns in which to keep a register of information such as finances, correspondence, and reading. The third diary, the *Biomètre, ou Mémorial horaire* (Biometer, or Hourly Memorial), provides a concise summary of a fortnight at a time, with its own system of notation and evaluation. The fact that the templates for this diary-writing system were put on sale proves that there was at least some public appetite for putting Jullien's system into practice, but we might also doubt, as does Lejeune ("Marc-Antoine Jullien" 113), whether it was even possible to maintain such a demanding system for more than a few days.

The differences between Rousseau's and Jullien's approach are considerable, both in their aims and their methods. Unlike Rousseau's imagined diary-writing project, Jullien's does not aim to expand our knowledge of the self; rather, it is intended as a practical tool for becoming more efficient, productive, and therefore happy, through practices of observation that are explicitly modeled on the natural sciences. Whereas Rousseau's project described in the *Reveries* renounces any synthesis of its observations, Jullien's method involves a meticulous process of notation followed by a secondary process of summary and evaluation, in order to improve one's way of life. Given these differences, it is unsurprising that Maine de Biran does not follow any one of these approaches to the letter. His *journal intime* does not perfectly resemble Rousseau's project for the "*Sensitive Morality*, or *The Wise Man's Materialism*" (with a focus on the relations between the state of the soul and its material circumstances) nor the transcription of thoughts described in the *Reveries*, and Maine de Biran only briefly and half-heartedly adopts Jullien's system in practice (Lejeune, "Marc-Antoine Jullien" 112). Nonetheless, and in spite of their differences, these two divergent influences from Rousseau and Jullien are repeatedly invoked in Maine de Biran's *journal intime*, and each of them contributes to producing a form of writing that is imagined to be both scientific and introspective, aiming both to gain a greater knowledge of the self and to improve the writer's life.

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From this brief foray into the early history of the *journal intime*, matters now appear to be more complicated than I initially suggested. While the *journal intime* involves a fundamentally different epistemological approach from the totalizing gesture of autobiography, the *journal intime* is also divided between two approaches that seem to be incompatible: those represented by Rousseau and Jullien respectively. In practice, these two approaches to the *journal intime* are never realized in their pure form, and their combination in real *journaux intimes* (such as in Maine de Biran's) is more a matter of productive compromise than a logical impasse. It would be possible to trace the relations between these two elements through the later history of the *journal intime*, but for the sake of brevity I shall merely draw attention to a work of fiction that capitalizes on precisely these contradictions between the two ideals: the short novel *Paludes*, published in 1895 by André Gide, who was himself one of the foremost practitioners of the *journal intime*.[11]

I have argued in "André Gide's *Paludes*: A Diary Novel?" that the first-person narrative in this work functions as a highly stylized parody of the *journal intime*, which contributes to its labyrinthine textual games. Like several other fictional uses of the *journal intime* by Gide and others, this narrative functions more like Rousseau's concept of an uninterpreted transcription of thought (compared with "real," nonfictional *journaux intimes*) and sometimes even approaches the related narrative form of interior monologue.[12] As such, it allows a large degree of narrative irony owing to the narrator/diarist's failure to interpret what he has written and so to perceive that which is obvious to the reader (this is instrumental in much of the novel's comic effect). But one of the strange features of this work is that the protagonist's *journal intime* coexists awkwardly with another form of diary-writing, a convoluted "agenda" that appears very much like a parody of Jullien's system. In his agenda, the narrator writes a week in advance what he intends to do on a given day, so that he has time to forget what he has written (Gide, *Paludes* 266). When the day arrives, he writes in a second column what he has actually done in reality; then he subtracts the second column from the first column to calculate "the deficit" or "what [he] should have done." He also occasionally falsifies the record in order to reduce his apparent "deficit" (296). What this text demonstrates in a satirical vein is that these two forms of daily writing, here practiced in parallel rather than combined in a single notebook, converge toward a single effect that reflects the experience of many real *journaux intimes* (most notably that of Henri-Frédéric Amiel): the diarist, intending to accomplish some form of action in writing or some improvement in his life, instead finds himself paralyzed in his ineffective habits by the writing practices themselves, which at best make his failures discernible and measurable.

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CONCLUSION

Having approached the subject of scientific discourses in autobiography and the *journal intime* in broad terms, my conclusions will necessarily be somewhat schematic. First, we can easily observe that a long-standing affinity exists between life writing and the natural sciences, beyond the era of Rousseau and the early *journal intime*, and long after authors had ceased to describe their writing in terms of thermometers, barometers, or biometers. The continuing strength of this connection is demonstrated by much more recent, internationally best-selling works such as Primo Levi's *The Periodic Table* in 1975, or Oliver Sacks's accounts of patients suffering from a wide range of neurological disorders (including his 1984 autobiographical work *A Leg to Stand On*). These works go far beyond a superficial use of currently popular scientific terms or even a purely metaphorical use of scientific concepts, and in both cases the author's professional experience (as a chemist and neurologist respectively) profoundly informs their presentation of the self and its relation to the body and material world. Yet I would argue that, beyond their immediate role in any given work, these varied uses of scientific discourses are also rooted in life writing's close relation to a single, fundamental *episteme* that came into being toward the end of the eighteenth century and is still recognizable in contemporary society and culture.

Life writing's rapid development alongside the emergence of this modern *episteme*, and its continuing association with it, is far more than a matter of historical curiosity; rather, it provides insight into the epistemological basis of not only the genres of autobiography and the *journal intime* but all life writing. As my brief readings have shown, this epistemological basis is not a unitary position but offers a vast field of possibilities situated between two diametrically opposed models: on the one hand, the totalizing impulse associated with autobiography, motivated by the desire to create a final meaning for a whole life; on the other hand, the gesture of renunciation that is central to the *journal intime*, the desire to leave fragmentary traces of life in all its contingency and variability, without reducing these traces to a single system. These two models are ideals that are probably unattainable in any pure sense. In practice, every autobiography finds itself having to compromise on its overly ambitious aims, and even Rousseau acknowledges at the end of the fourth book of the *Confessions* that "it is up to [the reader] to assemble these elements and to define the being made up of them; the result ought to be his work" (147). As for the *journal intime*, the very act of undertaking a writing project of this sort presupposes a secondary moment of interpretation by a reader, whether imagined (a textual addressee) or real (upon the text's actual publication), and no real *journal intime* perfectly resembles the project of unreflexive

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self-notation that Rousseau describes in the *Reveries*. Furthermore, works of life writing inevitably borrow elements from both these models at the same time. For example, an autobiography such as Michel Leiris's 1939 work *L'Âge d'homme* (Manhood) may foreground the contingent, unforeseeable experience of writing the autobiography itself, while a *journal intime* such as André Gide's *Journal 1889–1939* may be published with the totalizing aim of representing the author's whole life. Evidently, these two epistemological models are not limiting or prescriptive in nature but rather contribute to the proliferation of forms of life writing and their great capacity for renewal.

One final, even broader reflection concerns the relationship between life writing and literature in general. The opposition between the two models I have described invites a parallel with certain conceptual oppositions that have been used to interrogate the nature of literature, its limits, and its ideals. For example, Stéphane Mallarmé structured his pursuit of a literary ideal around an opposition between the "architectural and premeditated" Book (as an impossible, totalizing goal) and the fragmentary Album, whereas Roland Barthes used the terms "readerly" and "writerly" ("lisible"/"scriptible") to distinguish between texts in which a single, determinate meaning is fixed and those in which the reader is free to interpret and "rewrite" the text (the latter is typically the case of a *journal intime*, although this also resembles Rousseau's claim, cited above, from Book Four of the *Confessions*).[13] One might object that these literary debates concern other objects, such as the desire for a perfectly self-sufficient aesthetic unity (the Mallarméan Book), or the political implications of a text's openness to multiple meanings (the Barthesian writerly text). I shall not engage with how scholars of literary criticism have borrowed from various scientific discourses or the persistent question of the desirability of a "science of literature," and shall merely conclude as follows: given the intertwined history of life writing and the modern conception of literature since the late eighteenth century, it would be strange indeed if the essential self-questioning of literature were not founded, at least partly, on the experimentation of life writing regarding the possibilities and limits of our knowledge of the self.

NOTES

1. According to Philippe Lejeune, writing in *L'Autobiographie en France* in 1971, Rousseau cannot be considered to have invented the genre of autobiography, owing to the convergence of many contributing factors at this time, but he nonetheless produced its first recognizable, and highly influential, example (44). Alain Girard's 1963 work *Le Journal intime* dates the emergence of this genre to the turn of the nineteenth century (ix–x), but Lejeune's recent collection, *Aux Origines du journal personnel*, examines the gradual transformations in diary-writing practices from as early as 1750.

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2. Lynn Hunt provides an overview of critical perspectives on the changing concepts of society and the individual at this time in chapter three of *Writing History in the Global Era*, titled "Rethinking Society and the Self."
3. Lejeune introduces the term "autobiographical pact" in *L'Autobiographie en France*, and considerably expands and revises the concept in the 1975 work *Le Pacte autobiographique*. It seems appropriate to attribute these autobiographical pacts to the "author" rather than a "narrator," since these passages are specifically concerned with the text's relation to the author's self as a reality (of some sort) existing outside the text.
4. The concept of a "definitive text" is somewhat complicated, as the first, abridged publications of the first two parts used only the so-called Geneva manuscript, whereas the complete edition of 1798 supplemented this text with material from the Paris manuscript. I am referring here to the text as it appeared in the first publications rather than the earlier text of the "Neuchâtel manuscript," which I discuss below.
5. This does not mean, however, that Rousseau had confidence in the equanimity or justice of posterity's judgment, and the dialogues that make up *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques* (written between 1772 and 1776) are partly an attempt to dramatize and therefore influence the process of this judgment.
6. Among many possible examples, Michel Leiris's 1939 text *L'Âge d'homme* (Manhood) and Jean-Paul Sartre's 1964 text *Les Mots* (Words) predominantly use a psychoanalytic and an existentialist discourse respectively.
7. This difficulty is addressed in detail in Lejeune's *Aux Origines du journal intime*, which brings to light a large number of previously unknown or neglected diaristic texts (not all of which can be classed as *journaux intimes*) from the 1750s onward.
8. Lejeune discusses the scientific aims of Maine de Biran's diary-writing to ascertain whether the *journal intime* contributed practically to the nascent science of psychology (his conclusion: not to any significant extent). See the chapter "Vers la science?" in *Aux Origines du journal personnel* (125–35, and especially 128–30). Maine de Biran's *journal intime* is also attributed great importance as an early example of the genre in Girard's work *Le Journal intime*.
9. Pierre Pachet noted the frequent tendency in diaries "to consider the soul as being atmospheric, cloudy, in some way 'Nordic,'" which also accounts for the title of his historical study of the *journal intime*, *Les Baromètres de l'âme: naissance du journal intime* (38, translation mine). He also traces this tendency back to Pascal, who wrote among the fragments of the *Pensées* (composed around the middle of the seventeenth century), "I have my own fogs and fair weather inside of me" (qtd. in Pachet 37, translation mine).
10. The importance of Jullien for Maine de Biran's *Journal intime* is discussed in Girard's *Le Journal intime* (171–73), but I have particularly drawn on Lejeune's chapter on Jullien, "Marc-Antoine Jullien: Controlling Time."
11. Gide used the form of the *journal intime* in a large number of his fictions, and also published extensively from his own lifelong *journal intime*. Among many possible works on this subject, see "Le Journal fictif dans l'œuvre d'André Gide" by David Keypour, and *Le "Journal" de Gide et les problèmes du moi (1889–1925)*, by Daniel Moutote.
12. The ironic, metaphorical blindness of the narrator/diarist is strongly thematised in Gide's *La Symphonie pastorale*, where it is juxtaposed with the physiological blindness

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of the character Gertrude. The use of the *journal intime* as a narrative device resembling the interior monologue is apparent from as early as 1829 in Victor Hugo's short story *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné* (The Last Day of a Condemned Man).

3. Mallarmé's concepts of the Book and the Album are usefully discussed in Roland Barthes's lectures on *The Preparation of the Novel*, which I have cited here (182–85). Barthes uses the terms "readerly" and "writerly" most extensively in his 1970 work titled *SZ* (see 4).

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WRITING THROUGH CRISIS
TIME, HISTORY, FUTURITY IN GERMAN DIARIES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

KATHRYN SEDERBERG

Toward the end of the Second World War and in its immediate aftermath, an extraordinary number of Germans kept diaries. Contemporaries such as the writer Gerhard Nebel describe the time as an "era of diaries," not only because of the diaries later published by authors such as Ernst Jünger or André Gide but also because of the "countless diaries that were kept by unknown individuals during the war" (5). Writers mention receiving diaries as birthday, confirmation, and wedding gifts, being assigned diary writing in school, and in some instances even participating in diary competitions that the National Socialist Party organized.[1] In other cases, the diary offered a private forum for resistance in which one could write in opposition to the regime despite the possible dangers of doing so. Although some diarists began writing earlier, others only started to keep a diary during Nazi Germany's crisis years (1943–1945), as more soldiers went missing or died on the front, communication was broken off from friends and family, and there was a growing sense that one was living through a watershed historical moment. During this period, diary writing provided a possibility for self-expression and communication with the self and others in a quickly shifting social and political landscape.

This essay examines the form of what Philippe Lejeune has called the "crisis diary" through examples from Germany at the end of the Second World War. As personal and national crisis collided, the diary offered a possiblity for thinking about the meaning of the present moment in the face of defeat, as the future opened up and one had the feeling of living through history. I extend our understanding of the crisis diary by focusing on how diary writing reflects shifts in temporal frameworks, as horizons of past, present, and future change. Examining how diaries allow writers to position themselves in time

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helps us to see the relationship between concepts of time and the experience of crisis. This essay draws on the work of the historian Reinhart Koselleck and his concepts of the "space of experience" and the "horizon of expectation" to examine how the diary both thematizes and mediates temporality during periods of rupture. Through examples from German civilian diaries, I show how diaries allow for an unfinished and open writing of the self. The specific case of German diaries at the end of the Second World War presents an extreme situation in which diarists face a shift in thinking about history and the possibilities for the future. Studying these sources allows us to understand better how diaries present both a desire to narrate one's life with coherence and closure, and the impossibility of doing so.

My sources include both published and unpublished diaries selected from the large collections at the Deutsches Tagebucharchiv (German Diary Archive) in Emmendingen, Germany, and the Walter Kempowski Biography Archive in Berlin.[2] The latter archive originated in the personal collections of the author Walter Kempowski, who solicited and collected autobiographical writings for his *Echolot* project, a multivolume work presenting voices from the period 1943–1945. Kempowski received hundreds of responses, including letters, photographs, memoirs, and diaries, material that has now been turned over to the Akademie der Künste in Berlin for scholarly use.[3] The diaries cited in this essay are largely—but not exclusively—written by women, as I have focused on the German civilian perspective from the end of the war, a time when many men were absent.[4] These are also "ordinary" diaries in the sense suggested by Jennifer Sinor, who uses the term to make a case for reading diaries "shaped by the daily rather than the literary" (123). Granted that diaries of the Second World War were written during extraordinary times, my sources are nevertheless diarists who write more for themselves or for family than with publication in mind. Although these texts present incredible diversity in writing styles, I take Philippe Lejeune's now-classic definition of "a series of dated traces" as the diary's defining feature (179). Whether diarists write daily or at more irregular or sporadic intervals, the text is composed of dated entries. Cynthia Huff has written on the need for new interpretive strategies when working with manuscript diaries, noting how such texts are often "deeply contextualized, family-centered, multimedia discourses" characterized by "fragmentation, assumed and multiple voices, exclusion, and utilization of space" (508). Accordingly, Huff insists that we approach manuscript diaries with "a variety of simultaneously close and extensive reading strategies," for we as outside readers are not the intended audience (521).

The authors cited in this essay represent a range of different ages, family situations, geographic locations, political beliefs, and class backgrounds.

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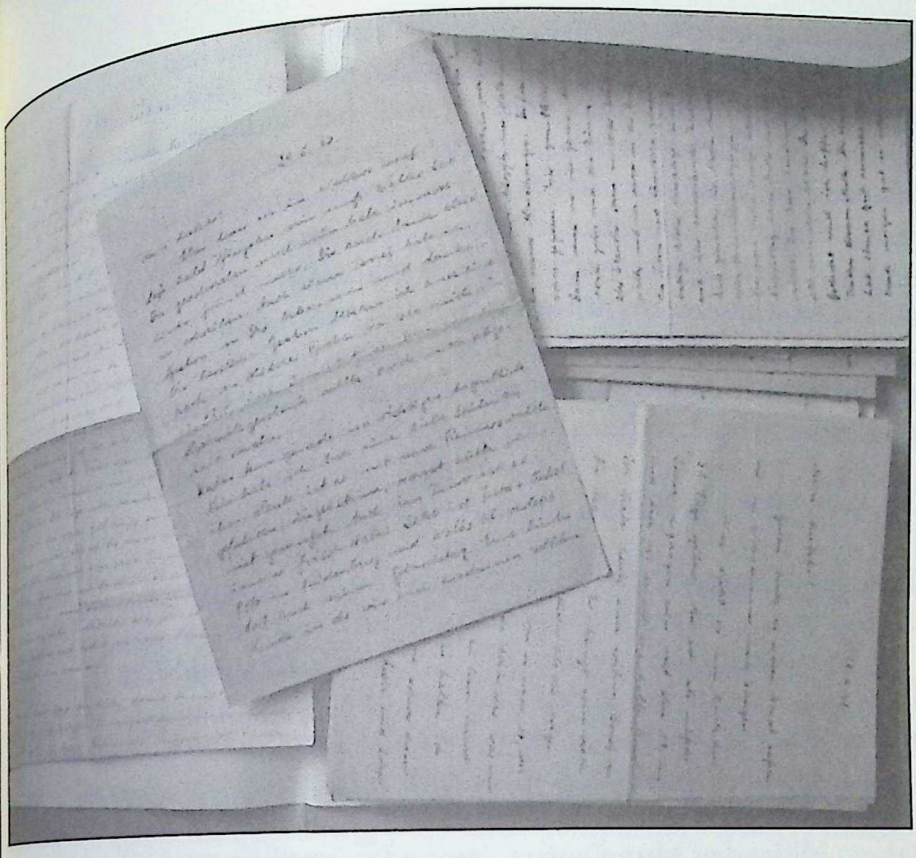

Figure 1. Loose-leaf diary pages from the Deutsches Tagebucharchiv in Emmendingen. Photograph by the author.

Some believe until late April 1945 that a miracle weapon will still win the war for Germany; one woman reads *Mein Kampf* for the first time after the war, lamenting that Hitler was so misunderstood outside Germany. Others are opponents of the regime and celebrate the arrival of the Allies and the end of Nazism. The diarists are from Berlin, Leipzig, Bremen, and other places across the German Reich. Despite their very different backgrounds, these individuals all chose to write a form of diary at the war's end. This essay cannot do justice to the richness of any one diary or the life of any single diarist; for this reason, my emphasis is on the practice of diary writing that many individuals had in common, with a specific focus on the way they represented their experience of time and temporality through diaristic writing.

At the outset, I would also like to highlight the difference between the German and English terminology, as the German word *Aufzeichnungen* (notes) is commonly used in German to refer to what we call "diaries" in English. Diarists also use the word *Tagebuch* (literally, day book), yet they often feel that they are not producing a "book," a composed and finished whole, but rather

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fragmentary writings that accompany daily life during wartime. These writers frequently refer not to a "diary" but to their *Heft* (notebook) or to their *Aufzeichnungen* or *Notizen* (notes), and their writing is sometimes dismissed with terms such as *Schreiberei* (writing business) or *Geschreibsel* (scribblings), which make clear that they feel their writing may be a futile endeavor. This terminology is a crucial reminder of the nature of diaristic writing as an act or practice; as Lejeune argues, "the text itself is a mere by-product, a residue" (31). This is not to say, however, that the text is unimportant, or even secondary. In my analysis, I consider both the writing practice and the language of the diary in crisis, taking seriously the rhetorical strategies used by diarists as they write as well as the functions of the writing act.

NAZI TIME IN DEFEAT

In order to interpret diaries written at the end of the Second World War, it is crucial to understand the model of futurity in National Socialist Germany. The Nazi concept of a *tausendjähriges Reich* (Thousand Year Empire) projected a "long" future in the construction of a racial empire, locating the present moment at the onset of a "new epoch" in world history. As the diarist Victor Klemperer observes in his entry on National Socialism from December 5, 1942, every little event was awarded "historic" value: "So oft in den letzten Jahren Hitler den Mund auftat, jemanden empfing etc. hießen die Zeitungsschlagzeilen: *Historische* Rede des Führers, *historisches* Zusammentreffen, historische . . . etc. etc." [Every time Hitler opened his mouth in the last few years, or received someone etc. the newspaper headlines read: *Historic* speech of the Führer, *historic* meeting, historic . . . etc. etc.].[5] The Nazis were attempting to revise the history books, to write history as it happened and make themselves the heroes of this history. After the catastrophic German defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943, however, there was a new urgency and higher stakes for the futurity of the German *Volk* and the war of racial annihilation in the East. In his famous speech on total war on February 18, 1943, Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels evades speaking of the defeat at Stalingrad, saying to his audience that "Now is not the time to ask how it all happened."

> The heroic sacrifices of our soldiers in Stalingrad has had vast historical significance for the whole Eastern Front. It was not in vain. The future will make clear why. When I jump over the past to look ahead, I do so intentionally. Time is short! There is no time for fruitless debates. We must act immediately, decisively, and thoroughly as has always been the National Socialist way. (qtd. in Bytwerk 115)

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This urgency is part of the Nazi rhetoric of *Sieg/Untergang* (victory/downfall), conveying a violent either/or and an existential crisis of the present. Goebbels describes time as "short," and prioritizes a future-oriented gaze. Eighteen-year-old Hannelore S., raised in an ethnic German family in Romania, repeats this ideologically charged phraseology on January 30, 1945 (twelve years since Hitler's so-called "seizure of power"): "In kurzer Zeit muß sich das Schicksal unseres Volkes entscheiden: entweder Aufstieg oder Untergang, bedingungsloser Untergang" [In a short time the fate of our people must decide: either rise or fall, conditionless downfall] (qtd. in Breloer 500). Using these Nazi tropes in her diary, she begins many entries with reflections on time, its passing, and the future. On August 27, 1943, giving an account of German victories," she writes: "Wir stehen jetzt wieder mitten im großen Zeitgeschehen" [We are once again in the midst of great historical events] (qtd. in Breloer 492). The concept of the Thousand Year Empire was above all a claim for the radical nature of the "new time," used to justify the most destructive measures in the process.

Rather than the "new time" of National Socialism, the war's end and German defeat opened up the future into a great unknown. As the Germans retreated on the Eastern Front, Hannelore's family was forced to move west in Germany. She observes the arrival of Allied soldiers in April 1945 and begins to pose new questions, questioning her faith in German victory: "Lieber Gott, was soll nun werden? An den Sieg zu glauben wäre Wahnsinn. Ende—Untergang. Was bedeutet 'Leben' noch? Es ist alles so zwecklos, so egal. Warum leben wir noch? Ist es nicht ein Verbrechen, jetzt noch zu leben? Zu leben u. jung zu sein?" [Dear God, what will happen now? To believe in victory would be madness. The end—downfall. What does "life" mean anymore? It is all so purposeless, so futile. Why are we still alive? Is it not a crime, to still be alive? To live and to be young?] (qtd. in Breloer 502). These questions—about God, the meaning of life, and faith in victory—reveal her despair and a process of self-questioning. Months later in mid-July 1945, she reflects again about living through this period:

> Die Zeit vergeht, man glaubt es kaum, daß auch diese Zeit vergehen kann. Aber der Mensch ist stark, stärker als man jemals zu glauben wagt. Ich möchte von dieser Zeit schreiben, recht viel schreiben, damit es für spätere Zeiten verewigt ist, aber ich kann es nicht. Es ist zu bitter, immer an dem wunden Herzen zu reißen u. zu zerren, immer wieder die entsetzlichen Bilder sich vor Augen halten, die einem sowieso schon fast das Herz zerreißen. (qtd. in Breloer 503)

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> [Time passes, one can hardly believe that this time, too, can pass. But people are strong, stronger than you would ever dare to think. I want to write about this time, write quite a lot, so that it is preserved for future times, but I can't. It's too bitter to always tug and tear at your wounded heart this way, to picture the horrible images over and over, images that already almost break your heart.]

We cannot know what she excludes here, claiming that she "cannot" write and alluding to "horrible images." But she does describe the difficulty in facing a new future. For Hannelore, as for many other Germans keeping a diary during this time, the Nazi model of futurity is called into question at the war's end. Rather than living through a grand and historic period, Germans are forced to confront the reality of defeat and a new position as the defeated.

In the face of this openness, diarists figure time as dynamic, intense, and quickly changing. For some individuals, the future becomes unthinkable. Twenty-four-year-old Maxi-Lore E. from Leipzig keeps a vivid account of her experiences at the war's end through regular entries. With the approaching front lines, she is stranded in a small town east of Leipzig where her mother is living. In her diary, which describes the confusion at the war's end, she repeatedly notes the feeling of the "unreality" of events and the sense that time has been radically disrupted. In one particularly poetic passage, from April 12, 1945, she writes how she wants to go to Leipzig to retrieve her photo albums:

> In einer Zeit, da andere froh sind, ihr nacktes Leben gerettet zu haben, denkt man doch nicht an derartige Erinnerungsstücke. Mein Wunsch ist ein unvernünftiges zeitfernes Begehren. Mir bedeuten aber die alten Aufnahmen alles in dieser schrecklichen Gegenwart. Warum soll man da nicht das Verlangen verspüren, mit den Gedanken immer und immer wieder in die Vergangenheit zu rutschen. Die Zukunft wird doch nicht gut werden. Schöne Erinnerungen kann einem aber niemand nehmen. Und die werden so lebendig, wenn man alte Fotos betrachtet, Bilder aus der Zeit, in der man mit größter Unbekümmertheit gelebt hat, weil man annahm, es könne nie, niemals anders kommen. Ich muß meine Fotos haben.
>
> [In a time when others are glad to have saved their bare lives, one shouldn't think about these kind of mementos. My wish is an irrational, unrealistic desire. But those old photos mean everything to me in this horrible present. Why shouldn't I feel the urge to slip into the past in my thoughts time and time again. The future will surely not be good. But no one can take nice memories away. And they come to life when you look at old photos, pictures from a time when you were living with the greatest carefreeness, because we assumed it could never, never be otherwise. I have to have my photos.]

In thinking about her photo albums, she describes an unsettled sense of time. The present is "horrible," and she wants to find comfort in the past, represented by the photos, which also contain a different future. She desires the future

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represented in those photos, rather than the distressing and uncertain future she now faces. She often returns to these motifs in her diary, posing questions about the future, as she does in her entry from May 1, 1945, when she says, "Kann es jemals wieder ein friedliches humanes Leben geben? Werden wir das noch erleben?" [Can there ever again be peaceful, humane life? Will we live to see it?]. On May 30, 1945, after the capitulation, she asks, "Wann werden wir wohl wieder mit Ruhe und Sicherheit in die Zukunft schauen können?" [When, I wonder, will we be able to look again with peace and security into the future?]. Her entries are long and self-reflective, and her questions reveal how she experiences the national crisis on a personal level. She also notes on May 15, 1945, her desire for coherence as the wish for "ein überschaubares Leben" [a comprehensible life], using metaphors of vision to express her desire for mastery, to have an "overview" of her life. Diaries such as Hannelore's or Marie-Lore's allow us to observe how subjects confronted with crisis register changes in their experience of time, knowingly or unknowingly, and how in doing so, they revise the horizons that shape this experience. In the historical case of defeated Germany, this crisis is national, signifying a radical break with the Nazi model of history and futurity, but also personal, as the death, destruction, and violence of the war's end has a direct impact on loved ones.

THE CRISIS DIARY

Diarists writing at the end of the Second World War not only thematize the future and its uncertainty, but their diary entries also reflect a shift in the writers' positions in mediating and representing past, present, and future. To describe this phenomenon better, I draw on the work of Reinhart Koselleck and his categories of the "space of experience," in which the past is made present and which also contains a sense of futurity as the "horizon of expectation" (256). Koselleck's work has received renewed attention in recent years, with historians as well as literary scholars turning their attention to examining temporal concepts such as futurity and presentism.[6] Following Koselleck, I am interested in conceptions of futurity, such as the "long" future of the Third Reich, or the frighteningly open future—or nonexistent future—brought about with defeat in 1945. Further, this essay explores how writers seek language to express their sense of time. To Koselleck, the horizon suggests an "absolute limit" (261) of that which can be imagined or expected: "it directs itself to the not-yet, to the non-experienced, to that which is to be revealed" (259). Experience, on the other hand, is constituted by layers of past experience, a nonlinear process, for "all experience leaps over time" (260). By this "leap," Koselleck refers to the work of memory and to the fact that human subjects recall experiences to mind via non-chronological and associative

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channels. Although the space of experience and horizon of expectation may seem like distinct spaces, Koselleck emphasizes that they do not exclude one another but rather work together to create a sense of temporality. In this way, historical subjects develop a sense of an alignment or misalignment of experience and expectation, which produces feelings of acceleration or deceleration, constancy and change.

The diary is exemplary of a space of experience in which individuals contemplate their past, present, and future from a position of the writing present. For this reason, I describe the diary as a "presentist" mode of self-representation, as diarists cannot narrate their lives from a point of relative stability, looking back. This present is "complexly layered," as Margo Culley describes, combining memories, wishes, and reflections that shift between temporal frameworks (20). Or, as Liz Stanley and Helen Dampier put it, "The moment of writing is always a present-time one, but the time being written about can be present-past and/or present-future as well as present-present" (27). Such descriptions rely on a concept of the present that corresponds to the moment of writing or to the space of the diary as it is filled with language. To describe the diary's movement in time, Lejeune often chooses organic, fluid metaphors, such as "surfing on time" (173). In contrast, I want to emphasize the diary's *stuttering* forward movement: the present of the diary is both continual and continually interrupted. Unlike other forms of life writing, such as memoir, which creates narrative coherence through its retrospective gaze, the diary consists of repetitive text segments (entries) that create ruptures in the narration of a life. The horizon of what the diary is able to process each day is often experienced as frustratingly small and limited. Diarists *want* to be able to narrate, or emplot, their lives, but they cannot. At the level of the sentence, diaristic writing shifts between present, past, and future tense, at times addressing the future in an inquisitive way that memoir does not. In fact, one notable difference between the diary and other forms of life writing is the interrogative mode, or the constant rhetorical questions posed in diary entries. Always faced with the uncomfortable knowledge that they do not know how their "story" will end, diarists ask "what is going to happen?"

At the end of the war, this state of uncertainty is often experienced as crisis, as diarists describe situations in which time feels somehow *different*, more intense, and anxiety-provoking. In her work on women's life writing and catastrophe, Miriam Fuchs makes the distinction between *crisis* as an "unstable condition seeking change" (8) and *catastrophe* "for situations that occur rapidly with immediate and shocking effects" (6). Fuchs notes that in practice these two terms are not mutually exclusive, as situations of crisis may escalate into catastrophe. At the end of the Second World War, crisis may be experienced

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as personal difficulty or loss, a critical point in the war, or a conflation of private distress and national catastrophe. Writers frequently reflect on the duration of writing and the desire to overcome this state of disequilibrium. Lejeune has also noted that crisis diaries differ from the "'all-purpose' diary," as they are written with a "predetermined end," or "organized around a particular area of experience" (189). This focus also creates a different relationship to some (imagined, anticipated) closure: "A crisis diary is . . . in search of its own ending. You are constantly searching how to get out of the crisis, and as a consequence, out of the diary itself" (195). The text comes to represent the crisis itself. A woman named Luise S. expresses this sentiment directly, writing on February 2, 1944, out of depression, "Ach wie lange werde ich das Heft benutzen müssen?" [Oh, how long will I have to use this notebook?]. Later, on February 10, 1944, she reformulates this same question, wondering "Ob das Heft wohl viele beschriebene Seiten bekommen wird?" [I wonder whether this notebook will have many of its pages written?]. She began writing a week after receiving notice that her husband had gone missing at the front, and she often addresses him directly. The diary (or "notebook") represents the time without her husband, and coming to terms with his likely death. As she can no longer exchange letters with him, the diary turns into a space of (imagined) communication and self-expression.

Lejeune astutely articulates the desire to "get out of the crisis" as the crux of writing during periods of difficulty. To extend and clarify Lejeune's work, I define the crisis diary in terms of the writer's position vis-à-vis the future, which has opened up in a way that breaks with one's previous sense of temporality. Reading the crisis diary as a text that continually repositions experience and expectation, as writers struggle to represent their place in and toward time, also enables us to see how diaristic writing produces new vantage points for self-representation. As we see in the above case of the diarist writing to her missing husband, the uncertain future shapes the text—if not providing the impetus for writing in the first place. Luise S. poses questions as her previous horizon of expectation has been shattered: instead of anticipating her husband's return, she faces his likely death. Fuchs points to the way that crisis and catastrophe are "materially present" (12), both outside and inside the autobiographical narratives, shaping self-representational practices. Wartime crisis, bringing extreme violence into daily life, limits and contours the length and content of entries, as well as the very possibility of writing.

The form of the diary itself—composed of a series of entries—allows for continual rewritings of past, present, and future. Each entry represents a new writing present and an opportunity for imagining a new or different future, and the writing subject may also change accordingly. The sixty-seven-year-old widow Irmela M. begins writing sporadically in 1944 to mourn the death

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of her husband, as well as the general death and destruction all around her. In May 1945, she begins to write more often, every few days, posing questions about her children, refugees, or the division of Germany. The diary is a place for her to reflect on the meaning of defeat, German guilt, as well as the health and security of her family and loved ones. If we look at how she positions herself toward other family members, we also note that her writing self shifts from widow to mother to grandmother, and the content of her entries shifts between private and national spheres. In a particularly long and reflective entry, she comments on the end of the Nazi era and the shared guilt of the "masses" in supporting the regime. She describes the feeling of shame that Germans didn't overthrow the Nazis themselves, and notes that what she has heard about the concentration camps is "so furchtbar, daß man es nicht glauben kann und will" [so horrible that you can't and don't want to believe it]. She ends this May 3, 1945, entry by projecting the future into her text: "Wenn meine Enkel einst meine Aufzeichnungen lesen, wird hoffentlich eine neue Zeit angebrochen sein, ein glückliches Zeitalter" [When my grandchildren someday read my diary, hopefully a new era will have dawned, a happy age]. She both needs the diary as a site of self-expression and communication and desires a future point that is distinct from the present, "outside" of the crisis. Writing as a grandmother, she is able to imagine this future, as her grandchildren stand in for future generations that will live through a different era. Thus writing for her is not only to write herself "out" of the crisis but to imagine a future present. The form of the diary itself, comprising a series of entries, enables such shifts in self-positioning.

MARKING AND ORDERING TIME

At the war's end, diarists frequently claim they are confused about time, while their dated entries attest to the contrary. As Ingeborg G. complains, "Noch immer hat niemand genaue Zeit—keine öffentliche Uhr mehr, keine Radio-Ansage. Man weiß kaum das Datum und den Wochentag" [Nobody has the exact time anymore—no more public clocks, no radio announcement. One hardly knows the date and the weekday]. She then immediately connects this situation of confusion to the wide-open and uncertain future, writing on May 6, 1945, "Was bringt die nächste Stunde?" [What will the next hour bring?]. Although she writes that one "hardly knows" the day, her dated diary entry clearly marks the day as "Sonntag, 6. Mai." In Bremen, Karl W. writes, "Man hat kein Empfinden mehr für zeitliche Einordnungen, weiß kaum, welcher Tag ist" [One no longer has a sense of temporal categories, hardly knows what day it is]. His entry is dated "28.4.45. Samstag." These diary entries—and the way they write and mark time while also thematizing the *feeling* of

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confusion, suggesting that time has been *taken from* them—exhibit a complex and at times contradictory relationship with time. They also reflect the desire to mark and know time, and the impulse to comment on the nature of time in the diary.

In such a period of crisis, the writing practice can be therapeutic, fulfilling a need for regularity and order. Sinor argues that so-called "ordinary diaries," or non-literary diaries, may be written to contain the extraordinary aspects of life to "make order" and "put things to right," creating a "fiction of stability" (131). The regularity of dated entries and use of "recycled" diction help to minimize the cognitive work of writing (134). Although this essay discusses diaries written during an extraordinary time, full of disorder and instability, Sinor's work is nevertheless important for guiding how we read these sources, revealing diarists' *desire* to create order and stability. "If the diary's primary technology is one of seizing and containing measured moments within highly regulated, ordered spaces," Sinor writes, "then that which is not measured (the detailed and the unusual) threatens to disrupt" (131–32). It is thus not only the narrative itself that creates continuity but the ritual act of writing. In the sources cited in this essay, we can often observe this conflict between disruptive events brought about by wartime crisis and diarists' attempts to counteract these disruptions through writing. The act of writing itself can provide a comfort, and the rhetorical repetition of certain ideas or tropes can be a way to fight against the fear of the unknown future.

In Koselleck's conceptualization of time, as the past is made present in experience, and the future is made present in expectation, the idea of "presence" seems to suggest a state in between and in flux, a process of imagining the contact between these temporal dimensions. The diary makes this backward- and forward-looking gaze visible. As diarists think and reflect in the writing present, they recount the recent past and wonder about the future. The past reveals itself through memories and reflections on these memories, and the future is made present in the form of hope, fear, or questioning. Repeated questions (What will happen to us? What is going to happen?) are symptomatic of writers' desire to understand their place in a life that is still being performed, being written and rewritten every day. The diary creates a "version of the self" (Fothergill 86), a life that "is always in process, always in some sense a fragment" (Culley 9). The past is a "moving target," as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson write in *On Autobiography*, "both the unified story and the coherent self are myths of identity. We are always fragmented in time, taking a particular or provisional perspective on the moving target of our pasts" (61). For diarists, it is above all the present and the future that are also "moving targets," as well as the story of the self, because it is constructed day to day rather than retrospectively.

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Diary writing thus contains a central tension: the desire to narrate a life as coherent and stable, and the form of entries, which reflect life as unfinished, in process, and full of disruptions. The diary can only present the future as a question mark and the present as a fragment continually under revision. Koselleck emphasizes the inability to experience the future when saying, the "horizon is that line behind which a new space of experience will open, but which cannot yet be seen. The legibility of the future, despite possible prognoses confronts an absolute limit, for it cannot be experienced" (261). Diarists want to read the future, to make it visible, but are "stuck" in the present. In her Berlin diary, the elderly widow Else T. writes on May 1, 1945, "Alles, alles ist ein großes Fragezeichen" [Everything, everything is a big question mark]. She repeats this theme over and over, noting how the openness and uncertainty of the future weigh on her. In comments such as this, the connection between content and form of the diary is readily apparent. Diarists express a gap between the strong desire to understand and narrate and the inability to do so from within a very limited horizon of expectation. By extension, such comments also note that the life narrative recorded in the diary is unfinished, in process, and the ending is unknown.

Some diarists begin writing because they feel that they are living through historical events. At the same time, however, the past is often experienced as too "near" to be understood, thus they project a distant future, a time from which they may look back and understand the present. Some imagine this future moment as the return of a loved one who might read the diary, or they write for future generations. This way of writing time projects leaps or jumps in time and space, desiring a point at which the present can be conceived as past and understood as meaningful. This would also mean one's own life story would then be more complete, more comprehensible. In her first entry, from February 15, 1945, Erika S., a young working woman in Berlin, writes that she keeps the diary for her future self, to record and document her thoughts during this "most critical" time of the war, in which time is intense and accelerated: "ich möchte von dieser Zeit, ihrem Alltag und ihren Lebensumständen etwas festhalten, wenn es uns überhaupt einmal vergönnt sein wird mit gelassenem Abstand das Geschehen des Krieges zu betrachten" [I want to capture something of this time, of daily life and living conditions, in case we should ever be able to look back calmly on the events of the war, years from now]. There is a tension here between the space of experience (daily life in wartime) and the diarist's horizon of expectation (a distant future in which she will be able to look back at this moment). It is this tension that generates a sense of historical time and, for these diarists, the sense that they are living through history. Even this vantage point ("someday") is called into question

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...a Erika S. uses a passive form of future perfect, "wenn es uns überhaupt einmal vergönnt sein wird" [in case we (Germans) should ever be able to look back]. The future is no longer in her hands.

WRITING TIME AS HISTORICAL

During this period of political, social, and cultural change, events are often perceived as historical, and time gains a sense of speed and urgency. Diarists frequently describe time as being filled with events, rapidly changing and exceeding their capacities to understand them, as Margarete J. exclaims in her May 2, 1945, entry: "Die Ereignisse überstürzen sich!" [Everything is happening all at once!]. Heinz K., head of the National Railway in Halle, begins writing to fill hours when he (under normal circumstances) would have been working: to make notes, as he writes in his April 14, 1945, entry about "dieser ereignisschwangeren Zeit" [this time pregnant with events]. The sense of acceleration reflects a growing gap between expectations and experience. Werner E. in Berlin often notes when he has not written for a couple of weeks and then summarizes what has happened in the meantime. On August 19, 1945, he writes that the process of writing itself makes him conscious of how quickly things are happening, that "ungeheuer rasch ungeheuer viel ereignet" [a tremendous lot is happening tremendously quickly]. Luise H., who has fled from the East to her parents-in-law near Dresden, begins writing a diary when she feels she has "leisure" time to write. She thus begins on February 18, 1945, with a retrospective summary and feels overwhelmed by the game of catch-up, struggling to note everything that has happened: "Die letzten Wochen waren so ausgefüllt bis zum Rande mit Ereignissen, Stimmungen, Gefühlen, daß es mir schwerfallen wird, alles nachträglich aufzuschreiben" [The past few weeks were so filled to the brim with events, moods, and feelings, that it will be hard for me to write everything down afterwards]. Echoing this sentiment, twenty-four-year-old Renate B., a secretary living in Berlin, writes on March 23, 1945: "Was geschieht so alle Tage?! Blätter und Blätter könnte man damit beschreiben" [What is all happening every day?! I could write pages and pages full]. The anonymous author of the diary later published as *A Woman in Berlin* figures her writing as an attempt to "capture" time in motion. After reflecting on the way time is "slipping by like water," without measure, she reflects on her writing: "Manchmal erstaunt es mich selbst, mit welcher Ausdauer ich diese zeitlose Zeit fixiere" [Occasionally I'm even amazed myself at how determined I am to capture this timeless time] (Anonyma 151). Such descriptions of time as accelerated become a recurring motif at the war's end, as diarists note a perceived excess of events—the inability to capture life in writing.

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This changed relation to time also affects diarists' sense of agency. Many writers figure time as a strong historical force and themselves as small or helpless, as passive objects being swept or pulled along. The actual confusion over what is happening reinforces this sense of powerlessness. In April and May 1945, with a general communication breakdown, many Germans are unsure when or whether the surrender has taken place. As Ingeborg G. notes on May 12, 1945, many civilians witnessed historical events with confusion, as the events "slip past" them:

> Neulich ein großes schönes Feuerwerk am Abendhimmel. Wir wußten nicht warum. Vermutlich war es der Tag der Kapitulation. Die Revolution ist uns entglitten, der Waffenstillstand ist uns entglitten, wir wussten nicht einmal, dass er da war, macht- und hilflos lassen wir alles geschehen, niemand fragt nach uns und kann uns brauchen, außer zum Schippen.
>
> [Recently there were great, beautiful fireworks in the evening sky. We didn't know why. Probably it was the day of capitulation. The revolution slipped by us, the armistice slipped by us, we didn't even know that it happened, powerless and helpless we let everything happen, nobody asks about us or can put us to use, except to clear rubble.]

As they attempt to read the signs around them, German civilians feel both inside and outside of history-in-the-making. This woman supposes the fireworks marked milestone events but cannot know for sure. She ends the comment with sarcasm, saying that the Germans, the defeated, have become bystanders, only good for manual labor.

Figuring time as historical, and the self as outside of this history, reinforces a sense of passivity, that one is not an actor or agent in history but a victim. The concept of passivity is sometimes combined with rhetoric of being betrayed and abandoned (by Nazi leadership). Writing in Potsdam, outside of Berlin, twenty-one-year-old Inge B. demonstrates anger and frustration with this "betrayal," and at the same time she holds on to Nazi language of "faith" and "hope" in the *Endkampf* (the final struggle). This language, from her late May 1945 entry, alternates between "I" and plural "we" forms and reflects an ambiguous sense of agency or passivity:

> Ich konnte mein Tagebuch nicht weiterführen, es fehlte an Zeit. Das Geschehene nahm uns mit, stellte uns in Kampf und Not und verbot jede persönliche Regung. Jetzt weiß ich, was Krieg ist, jetzt weiß ich, was Furcht ist, weiß aber auch, was Glauben und Hoffen ist. Wie konnte der Führer sein Volk, das an ihn glaubte, in

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dieses Elend stürzen. Wie konnten sie von Siegen reden, wo der Feind schon mitten im Land war!

[I couldn't keep writing my diary, there wasn't time. The events took us along, putting us in struggle and distress and forbidding any kind of personal feeling. Now I know what war is, now I know what fear is, but I also know what faith and hope is. How could the Führer plunge his people, who believed in him, into such misery. How could they talk of victories, when the enemy was already halfway into the country!]

Like many others, Inge B. extends her "I" to a larger "we" of civilians being taken along by events, reinforcing the lack of personal agency, a separation of personal and world-historical spheres. She feels not only (collectively) betrayed because of the defeat, but because she now knows better the extent of the lies that were being circulated about a possible victory. Her continued use of Nazi language and belief in the Führer, at the same time as she expresses anger about betrayal, reflects a confused "now" of the writing present. She seems unable to do away with Nazi language of futurity (faith, hope, *Volk*), but yet is also disillusioned, sensing that there is a new "now," and new realities in terms of experience (war, fear).

The figuration of time as historical is often connected to a notion that history has cyclical, repetitive structures and recognizable patterns. Margarete J. begins writing a diary when she feels overwhelmingly lonely at the war's end, with two small children at home and a husband on the front. She writes on May 17, 1945,

So flüchte ich, indem ich mein Tagebuch schreibe und denke an alle Lieben. Wie traumhaft kommt mir das frühere Leben vor! Jetzt zweifelt man an allem. Hat der Krieg uns alles genommen? Werde ich je wieder ein Beethovenkonzert hören können? Auf welchem Tiefpunkt befinden wir uns! Aber in der Geschichte hat es noch viel schlimmere Kriegsenden gegeben und wieviel Menschen vor uns mußten noch entsetzlichere Dinge über sich ergehen lassen.

[So I escape by writing my diary and thinking about my loved ones. Our past life now seems like such a dream! Now we have doubts about everything. Did the war take everything from us? Will I ever again be able to hear a Beethoven concert? We are at the lowest low! But there have been much worse defeats in history and how many people before us have had to endure things even more terrible.]

The diary is figured as a safe site of refuge, where she can pose questions about the future. Her use of the first-person plural is also an ambiguous "we" that seems to shift from the familial to the national collective. The mention of Beethoven represents a notion of belonging to a cultured nation, which she

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now also calls into question. She imagines herself in a long line of "the defeated," seeming to accept anything "terrible" the German people will now face in defeat.

Similarly searching for language to describe the experience of defeat, the journalist Margret Boveri recalls images from Napoleonic battles: "Die Sache kommt näher und wird immer echter. Die Rauchwolken sehen aus wie auf den Schlachtbildern aus der napoleonischen Zeit" [This matter comes nearer and is becoming more real. The clouds of smoke look like those in battle paintings from the Napoleonic era] (66). Images from the war bring about another temporal "leap," connecting past and present. The view of smoke signifies days of grander warfare, of horses and cannons. In Kassel, Wilhelm M. is also reminded of the Napoleonic era, reflecting on the cyclical nature of history in his diary on July 31, 1945:

> Ach ja, die Geschichte ist eine Lehrmeisterin, aber wer lernt *wirklich* aus ihr? Ein A. Hitler hat auch immer wieder den erzieherischen Wert des Geschichtsstudiums betont, und doch hat ihn das nicht davor bewahrt, die Tatsachen *seiner* Gegenwart völlig falsch zu beurteilen und für die Sprache seines Geschicks nach wie vor blind und voreingenommen zu sein. Der freie Blick über den Gang der Dinge hin, der sich willenlos hingibt—wie selten ist er!
>
> [It is true, history is a schoolmaster, but who *really* learns from him? Someone like A. Hitler has always emphasized the instructional value of studying history, but that didn't save him from judging the facts of *his* present time completely wrong and still being blind and prejudiced to the language of his fate. To have a clear view over the course of things, which readily offers itself up—how rare that is!]

In this self-reflective passage, Wilhelm notes the challenge of reading history—its events and structures. He reflects on the difficulty of judging history in the present, and gaining a "clear overview." Because of their position "inside" historical structures, diarists cannot narrate their life experiences with coherence and are unsure of their relation to time and history. In this moment of national and historical crisis, diarists describe a sensation that the nature of time itself has changed.

CONCLUSION

In the diaries described in this essay, we can observe the impact of crisis at multiple levels, as the personal crisis of German civilians was coupled with the national crisis of Germany. The National Socialists propagated a monumental and grandiose model of the future, suggesting their empire would last a "thousand years," and that the German people were living through

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historic" events. With the defeat of Germany in 1945, this model of futurity was brought to an end, and to many Germans the future seemed frightening-ly uncertain. The difficulties of the war's end not only provided a motivation for writing, but wartime crisis also had a formal effect on the way individuals wrote their lives. Diarists used their writing in an attempt to "grasp" or bring order to time, seeking figures, models, and metaphors for temporality, and thus the *ability* to imagine and describe the experience of time. I have described this tension as central to the diary as a form of life writing. On the one hand, writers want to narrate life as a series of events, with closure, writing from a position in the future looking back. On the other hand, however, diarists are stuck in the present, limited by the form of the diary itself, which always has a new horizon of expectation. They pose questions, contradict themselves, and imagine a future point when they may be able to look back on their present. Diaristic writing does not present the "flow" of time or the arc of a life, as memoirs might, but rather images and impressions that offer glimpses of a life that is still being written and lived.

NOTES

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1. Many studies of diaries during National Socialist rule have promoted the idea that diary writing was a private act and a form of resistance. However, as Hans-Dieter Schäfer argues, it was also a "popular genre of the National Socialists" (84) and was encouraged as a public activity to foster *Gemeinschaft* (community). For more on the National Socialists' promotion of diary writing, see zur Nieden, Siegmund, and Steuwer. See Fritzsche, Peitsch, and Graf and Steuwer for more on diary writing in Nazi Germany and in the immediate postwar period.
2. See Lessau for a study of the origins of diary archives in Germany. Please also note that all sources from the Walter Kempowski Biography Archive have been anonymized with pseudonyms. I cite sources by first name and initial, the common practice for anonymization of these sources. All translations are my own unless noted otherwise.
3. See Damiano's guide to Kempowski's *Echolot* project.
4. For studies of Jewish diaries in the Second World War and the Holocaust, see Garbarini and Zapruder.
5. This passage is not included in the published version of the diaries (German or English) but can be found in the digital critical edition.
6. Among other studies, see Hartog, Gumbrecht, and Eshel.

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DERRIDA'S OTOBIOGRAPHIES

MELIZ ERGIN

. . . what interests me today is not strictly called either literature or philosophy. . . . "Autobiography" is perhaps the least inadequate name, because it remains for me the most enigmatic, the most open, even today.
—Jacques Derrida, "This Strange Institution Called Literature" (34)

When asked to classify his writings under the domain of a single genre, Derrida refers us to the loosely defined notion of autobiography. This essay examines the autobiographical thread in Derrida's work to elaborate on the twin problem of identity and writing. The purpose of the essay is threefold. In the first part, I focus on Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence in traditional autobiography to develop an understanding of his notion of "otobiography." Derrida exposes the originary breach in the interiority of the autobiographer and demonstrates that the entanglement of self and alterity disrupts the desire for self-presence in autobiography. In the second part, I discuss the intersection between philosophy and autobiography to elucidate the grafting potential of language, which overflows the boundaries established by generic protocols and turns writing into a practice that locates its source in self-differentiating textual operations. In the third and final part, I focus on a reading of *Monolingualism of the Other; or, the Prosthesis of Origin*, which is at once an autobiographical and philosophical work, to show how Derrida's theories of selfhood, language, and writing work themselves out in practice.

Derrida's work on autobiography raises a number of questions that are central to current conversations in the field of life writing studies. As Leigh Gilmore notes in her introduction to *Autobiography and Postmodernism*,

> While on the one hand, most traditional critics of autobiography have sought to argue for autobiography's generic coherence and historical continuity in order to win some space in the tightly contested arena of literary studies, many postmodern explorations, on the other hand, seek to do without or do away with the definitional heft and limits provided by genre theory. (6)

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As a non-traditional autobiography, *Monolingualism* leads to a similar inquiry about genre theory. Furthermore, Derrida's work explores the notions of self-economy and relational identity, and thus contributes to the existing scholarship on autobiography advanced by scholars like Susanna Egan and Paul John Eakin. Whereas Egan states that autobiography "adjusts self-definition in order to accommodate unexpected or original relations with others" ("Encounters" 597), Eakin approaches relationality through social connectivity in *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*. Eakin studies a number of narratives such as Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller*, whose "transmission of other people's stories, stories that are in turn versions of a shared body of myths and legends, is properly understood as an act of self-definition" (73) and points to "an increasingly large component of 'we'-experience in the 'I'-narratives" (75). While these critics debunk the autonomous self by focusing primarily on relations with others, Derrida places emphasis on interpersonal as well as intrapersonal alterity such as the ironic opening between two interlocutors, textual and extratextual selves, the addresser and the addressee. Finally, *Monolingualism* is concerned with testimony and the tension between truth and fiction, two issues that are crucial to ongoing debates in the field of life writing studies as evident in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's essay "Witness or False Witness" and Leigh Gilmore's recent book *Tainted Witness*.

There are currently two seminal texts that study the centrality of autobiography to Derrida's writing: Robert Smith's 1995 *Derrida and Autobiography* and Joseph G. Kronick's 2000 "Philosophy as Autobiography." Smith's work offers a reading of Derrida's philosophy by placing it in a dialogue with other continental philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, and Paul de Man. He argues that, for Derrida, autobiography is not so much a literary genre as a general condition of writing that disturbs conventional conceptions of life and death. Kronick's article focuses on the relationship between philosophy and autobiography. He studies the problem of reflexivity in the first half of the essay and moves to an analysis of Augustine's *Confessions* and Derrida's "Circumfession" in the second half. While Kronick's and Smith's works offer comprehensive accounts of the place of autobiography in Derrida's work, their focus remains on questions and texts that are different from the ones studied in this essay. Neither Kronick nor Smith analyze *Monolingualism*. This essay contributes to existing scholarship by focusing on a text that has received relatively little attention and by approaching autobiography studies through a philosophical perspective that can radically alter our understanding of identity and writing.

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THE OBSTACLE TO AUTO-EXPOSITION

Although the question of autobiography is present in many of Derrida's texts and his entire oeuvre can be read as an analysis of the signature, four works in particular capture our attention with regard to the incursion of the autobiographical subject: *Glas*, "Circumfession," *Monolingualism of the Other*, and *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Among these four texts, *Monolingualism* is perhaps the most personal, as it focuses on the acculturation Derrida underwent as a Jewish boy in Algeria when it was a French colony. It is both a philosophical treatise and a semiautobiographical excursion that questions the limits of our ownership of language and identity. Derrida combines theoretical reflection with historical particularity and foregrounds his own relationship to French language and culture. He offers a phenomenological description of the complexities and ironies of writing and identity we often overlook because of our idealistic tendencies.

In the epilogue to *Monolingualism*, Derrida defines his engagement with this text in terms of what makes the engagement problematic:

> What I am sketching here is, above all, not the beginning of some autobiographical or anamnestic outline, nor even a timid essay toward an intellectual bildungsroman. Rather than an exposition of myself, it is an account of what will have placed an obstacle in the way of this auto-exposition for me. An account, therefore, of what will have exposed me to that obstacle and thrown me against it. (70)

Placing emphasis on the *obstacle* to auto-exposition, Derrida echoes the tone of the entire text. He hints at the complications that arise on the way to the dream of an idiomatic writing, suggesting that despite our desire for an absolute self-presence, a strict autobiography is an impossibility.

Derrida's engagement with autobiographical theory can first and foremost be understood as a reaction to the radical autonomy assigned to the subject in the self-reflexive analyses of modern European philosophy. As Rodolphe Gasché writes in *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the History of Reflection*, from the moment that it became a key methodological concept for Cartesian thought, reflection signified a certain principle of philosophical thinking: "By lifting the ego out of its immediate entanglement in the world and by thematizing the subject of thought itself, Descartes establishes the apodictic certainty of self as a result of the clarity and distinctness with which it perceives itself" (13). Self-reflection "makes the human being a subjectivity that has its center in itself, a self-consciousness certain of itself. . . . It constitutes the autonomy of the *cogito*, of the subject, of thought. *Liberum est quod causa sui est*. Only the subject that knows itself, and thus finds the center of all certitude

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...itself, is free" (Gasché 14). To that end, in modern philosophy since Des-...cartes, the autonomy of the subject who turns upon itself for absolute reflec-...tion has represented an ideal on the way to individual freedom.

The autobiographical tradition has been informed by a similar scope of self-reflexivity and self-certitude as found in the philosophical tradition. Historically, autobiography as self-life-writing has been perceived as a genre that grants the author the right to affirm a unique identity as his property. As Béla Szabados remarks:

> Traditional autobiography can be seen as depending on a certain picture of self-knowledge, on a certain picture of mind whose dimensions have been elaborated by Descartes and scores of philosophers of mind. This picture has as its features "privileged access" to the contents of our minds, epistemological solitude and final, incorrigible authority over first-person psychological utterances. (2)

Seen from this perspective, autobiography is built on three distinct pillars: a self (an *autos*), a set of chronologically related empirical events and the facts of the subject's life (*bios*), and the inscription of the life story (*graphe*). The autobiographer is concerned with recalling a transparent self that exists prior to the produced text. All outward movement returns to the self-enclosed subjectivity of the author and essence consummates itself through teleological development.

Derrida reveals the fissures inherent to such an understanding of epistemological solitude by foregrounding both the impossibility of disentangling the self from the world and the desire for such an idealistic moment of self-closure. He casts a skeptical eye on the obscure relationship among self, life, and writing, and perceives writing as a playful practice that can radically transform the way we think of selfhood and autonomy. The first point Derrida scrutinizes is the fantasy of the "proper" in self-relation. As he notes in *Points*, "there is naturally a desire, for whoever speaks or writes, to sign in an idiomatic, that is, irreplaceable manner. But as soon as there is a mark, that is, the possibility of a repetition, as soon as there is language, generality has entered the scene and the idiom compromises with something that is not idiomatic: with a common language, concepts, laws, general norms" (200). Disturbing the dream of singularity, Derrida notes that the autobiographical subject is already compromised and loses some of its uniqueness the moment it begins to write. The autobiographical signature thus embodies the tension between singularity and idiosyncrasy on the one hand, and generality and repeatability on the other. The iterability of the signature carries in its very inscription the trace of the absence of its author, whose "future disappearance will not, in principle, hinder [the mark produced by writing] in its functioning" and

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from offering itself to be reinterpreted by others (Derrida, "Signature" 8). Autobiography is thus aligned with a kind of *écriture* that simultaneously inhabits and disinherits the writing subject. As soon as the writer inscribes "I," it is part of a "we." Hence the taxonomic certainties of the "I" are suspended in a *récit* where I/we are, where I summon us [*ou je/nous somme*]" (Derrida, "The Law of Genre" 252). The entanglements begin here with the very challenge set against the idea of the single, indivisible subject. Autobiography entails an irresolvable tension between singularity and generality. A recognition of this tension is important in understanding the differencing force of time introduced into the body of the autobiographical text, whose closure is postponed by an implicit delay.

For Derrida, the testamentary structure in autobiography is informed by a division called into play by the iterability of writing, where even the most idiomatic signature is redefined by way of its dependency on the infinite return of an other. Seen in this light, "the autobiographical does not overlap the auto-analytical without limit. Next, it demands a reconsideration of the entire *topos* of the *autos*" (Derrida, *The Post Card* 322). Hence Derrida shifts the focus from *auto* to *oto* (combining forms of *ous*, which means "ear" in Greek) and remarks that "it is the ear of the other that signs. The ear of the other says me to me and constitutes the *autos* of my autobiography" ("Otobiographies" 50–51). The autobiographical signature thus becomes effective not at the moment it takes place but only when the message is received by other ears. The receiving ear may be perceived both as the ear of the other or the ear of the autobiographical subject who "seals—or, in phenomenological terms, affects—itself in the completion of a circuit between voice and hearing, mouth and ear" (Smith 76). Derrida places critical attention on structural alterity and asserts that "The signature is left to the initiative, to the responsibility, to the discretion of the other. . . . One will sign, if one signs, at the moment of the arrival at destination, not at the origin" (*Negotiations* 346). By shifting his focus from the origin of the signature to its moment of arrival to other ears, Derrida notes that self-coincidence is deferred inexhaustibly, leaving only a trace of the subject writing with a "desire without a horizon" (*Monolingualism* 73). Self-actualization remains an interminable project for the autobiographer left to the discretion of the other in a state of endlessly unfulfilled desire. Where "*Auto*-affection constitutes the same (*auto*) as it divides the same" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 166), every autobiography is an otobiographical interplay between self and other, mouth and ear.

An understanding of self-actualization as a continuous process calls into question traditional autobiography's focus on the narrative of a finite life. In contrast to the traditional autobiographer, who "aims to transform the course

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of life into an eternal present, that is, fix becoming as being or posit life as truth" (Kronick 999), Derrida perceives autobiography as a practice aligned with writing in *différance*, the not-here and not-now. He turns from an ontological toward a "hauntological" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 10) understanding of writing as "the name of the structure always already inhabited by the trace" (Spivak xxxix). Simultaneously gazing to both past and future, Derrida locates the autobiographer in a temporal entanglement that suspends the border between life and death. As Smith notes in *Derrida and Autobiography*, "The attempt at autobiography, the redoubled but doubly failed attempt to seize the name and 'be there' as oneself, entails a deeper involvement with one's own death" (72). An auto*bio*graphy, then, more nearly resembles an auto*thana*tography.[1] If "life does not go without death, and that death is not beyond, outside of life" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 141), then "Every time 'I' begin to write (the life of) my self, death interposes. Every autobiography is an allegory of the writer's death, an autobio*thana*tography" (Kronick 1014).[2] As "the death-bearing name . . . released throughout writing" makes it impossible to capture the history of an empirical life in a complete and self-referential narrative, autobiography can no longer reduce "the life term to a coextension of meaning with history" (Smith 73, 191).

Each time "I" writes, the signature of that "I" becomes the bearer of both the survival and the death of the autobiographer, gathering language "not in its identity or its unity . . . but in the uniqueness or singularity of a gathering together of its difference to itself" (*Monolingualism* 68). To capture this force of self-differentiation, Derrida shifts the autobiographical voice from the first person singular to the second person singular: "*ergo es*" ("Circumfession" 314). Descartes's infamous phrase *cogito ergo sum* is slightly bent to accentuate the fact that any form of self-knowledge depends on the infinite return of the other. Derrida's purpose in highlighting structural alterity is to draw our attention to "the space of *relation*" (*Monolingualism* 19) between self and other that is always already there, prior to any ethical decision. He does not speak of hospitality toward the other as a matter of choice, for expressions such as "'openness to the other'" are "worn enough to give up the ghost" (40). What he demonstrates is that "all forms of identity are auto-immune in that they never completely close in on themselves" (Dooley and Kavanagh 142). Even in a singular event such as confession, "one always confesses the other. . . . There is this division, this divisibility of the confession which structures the confession, so that I never confess myself. . . . If confession is guided by a teleology, it is not confession. It's just an economy, it's a therapy" (Derrida, "Composing 'Circumfession'" 25). Derrida distinguishes between a relative and an absolute hospitality, and adds that "For the truth to be 'made' as an

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event, then the truth must fall on me—not be produced by me, but fall on me, or visit me" (23). Critiquing Cartesian solipsism and the autobiographer's right to affirm a unique identity as his indisputable property, he reminds us that selfhood must be understood by way of its interplay with alterity.

If any understanding of selfhood is understood through this interplay with alterity, then autobiography can be conceptualized as a form of indebtedness. In his posthumously published *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida turns to traditional autobiographies, where "the discourse on the self does not dissociate truth from an avowal . . . from a truth that would be due, a debt, in truth, that needs to be paid off" (21). He asks whether there has ever been an ancient form of autobiography free from the notion of truth as debt before Christianity, its institutions of confession, and before "a reading of the prodigious *Confessions* of European history, which have formed our culture of subjectivity from Augustine to Rousseau" (21–22). At the same time, he argues that if truth is to be perceived as debt, then it is a debt that can never be settled.

Derrida understands autobiography as an ongoing indebtedness, "a secret contract, a credit account which has been both opened and encrypted" ("Otobiographies" 9). The autobiographer "has no relation to himself that is not forced to defer itself by passing through the other in the form, precisely, of the eternal return" (Derrida, "Roundtable on Autobiography" 88). There is thus a necessary detour called into play by the inextricable entanglement with alterity, which can be understood as the heterogeneity both within oneself and among subjects of contradictory positions out in the social world. Like the obstacle to auto-exposition, entanglement entails both a risk and a promise. It is a risk, because one of the conflicting sides may resort to homogenization and seek to assimilate the other. Yet it can also be a promise if the mutual dependence between self and other is seen as a productive and irresolvable tension rather than a moment of deviation exterior to their relation. If identity is rooted in reciprocal relationships, then entanglement can be conceptualized as a mode of engagement, where the self yields neither to "purely ethical behaviour (total openness to the other)" nor to "a complete violent exclusion of the other (total appropriation of alterity)" (Roffe 42). Entanglement can thus be seen as comprising a network of filiations variably loosening and tightening, but never allowing identity to close in on itself.

Entanglements hold an important place in Derrida's work on identity as well as on writing and genre. His broader concern lies in questioning the desire for essentialist taxonomies, whether it is the taxonomy of the subject or a generic taxonomy of writing that is at stake. Autobiography is an intriguing starting point for such an inquiry because of the ipseity taken for granted in

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traditional autobiographies, where, "in whatever manner one invents the story of a construction of the *self*, the *autos*, or the *ipse*, it is always *imagined* that the one who writes should know how to say *I*" (*Monolingualism* 28). Derrida unsettles this self-relation and reveals the playful aspect of autobiography, arguing that "autobiographical anamnesis presupposes *identification*. And precisely not identity. No, an identity is never given, received, or attained; only the interminable and indefinitely phantasmatic process of identification endures" (28). What he calls an obstacle to auto-exposition is this enduring process of identification, which eliminates the possibility of an exhaustively determinable context.

The division of the *autos*, however, "doesn't mean that one has to dissolve the value of the autobiographical récit" (Derrida, "Roundtable on Autobiography" 45). Even as the dream of unity remains only a promise, Derrida does not condemn writing as a futile activity. Instead, he elucidates the excessive forces at work in self-reflection and the viability of writing. The excess is called into play by the very experience that "writing destines itself, as if acting on its own, to anamnesia" (*Monolingualism* 8), yet it also enfolds its own failure. This simultaneous desire for and failure of anamnesis gives rise to "the feeling of existence as excess, 'being-superfluous', the very beyond of meaning giving rise to writing" (Derrida, "This Strange Institution" 36).[3] Derrida also refers to this dynamic as "the autobiographicity that greatly overflows the 'genre' of autobiography" (Derrida and Ferraris 41) and trespasses the different forms of writing. The excess shifts our focus from the written work to the *desire* for writing. It throws light on the inexhaustible remainder in writing, which "demand[s] that a sort of opening, play, indetermination be left, signifying hospitality for what is to come [*l'avenir*]" (31). This excess in writing is what enables a revision of its contents.

The autobiographical desire and failure accentuated by Derrida problematizes traditional autobiographies, where authors organize the past to legitimize the proper names they construct for themselves. Derrida specifically uses the word "mourning" instead of "remembering" to point out that we are never finished with comprehending the past. Although memory fails to recover what has been irretrievably lost, we do not give up the desire to mourn the fractured past. He uses the term *déferlement* in reference to this crucial drift [*dérive*] in memory and its "surging wave" (*Monolingualism* 31). Memory "ebbs and flows like a wave that . . . swells, sweeps along, and enriches itself with everything, carries away, brings back, deports and becomes swollen again with what it has dragged away" (31). Connoting both resurging and deferral, *déferlement* alludes to the double movement of expropriation and reappropriation. The wave analogy draws attention to an ongoing momentum that

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foregrounds "the generative movement in the play of differences" (Derrida, *Positions* 27), thus proving to be a useful tool in disputing history's logocentrism and orders of subordination. It enables us to perceive history—personal as well as collective—as developing in self-generating complexity, not in terms of overcoming or transcending linearity.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND PHILOSOPHY

Derrida's interest in autobiographical memory should be seen in relation to his critique of the metaphysics of presence in Western philosophy. When Derrida inquires into the limitations imposed on the autobiographical subject and destabilizes the circular understanding of memory and identity, he also dismantles the same limitations bearing upon philosophical writing. As he writes in *A Taste for the Secret*, philosophy "has always been at the service of this autobiographical design of memory" (Derrida and Ferraris 41). The implication of this statement can perhaps be best understood if we turn to Kronick's observation that "autobiography shares with philosophy the problem of self-accounting. . . . One of the great claims of philosophy is to account for origins, its own and others'" (1003). This common concern for self-accounting in philosophy and autobiography is an important issue Derrida rigorously addresses in much of his work.

When Derrida casts a skeptical eye on the distinct boundaries drawn between *autos* (self), *bios* (life), and *graphe* (writing) in traditional autobiography, he is at once calling into question the same boundaries in Western philosophy. As he notes in the interview "The Three Ages of Jacques Derrida," philosophers from the Western tradition—from Aristotle to Heidegger—"consider their own lives as something marginal or accidental. . . . Biography is something empirical and outside, and is considered an accident that isn't necessarily or essentially linked to the philosophical activity or system" (McKenna). Derrida, by contrast, points out that lived experience cannot be separated from philosophical activity and the philosopher cannot disentangle himself from his work. Calling attention to the autobiographical aspect of philosophical writing, Derrida questions "the *dynamis* of that borderline between the 'work' and the 'life', the system and the subject of the system" ("Otobiographies" 5). Just as the distinctions among subject, life, and work cannot easily be made in autobiography, the same boundaries cannot remain intact in the philosophical work. The conventional view that philosophy is the representation of universal truths unaffected by personal or collective history does not find a safe place in his work.

Derrida locates the philosopher, much like the autobiographical subject, in an ongoing state of indebtedness in his quest for an originary truth. The

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...tion of indebtedness shifts our focus from the ideal of a transcendental ...uth to the question of testimony. As Kronick argues, "The alliance of phi...sophy with autobiography is . . . of the fiction that attaches itself to truth ...which occurs whenever one testifies or swears to truth" (1008). Derrida ...akes visible this interplay of truth and fiction in self-reflective analyses of ...oth autobiography and philosophy. He reevaluates philosophical writing in ...ight of the obstacle that autobiographical memory encounters on the way ...o the completion of a circular narrative. As he suggests in *Monolingualism*, ...his obstacle—which goes by different names such as excess, *déferlement*, *dif...érance*—is what sustains the exposition of truth in philosophical inquiry in a ...orm of detour. The ambiguity introduced into the body of the philosophical ...ext reflects a wider concern with testimony, singularity, and context.

When Derrida analyzes philosophical works, he calls into question the es...entialist prerogatives of the institution of philosophy and asserts that these ...rerogatives emerge out of a given historical context. As Robert J. C. Young ...bserves in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, "whereas other phi...osophers would write of 'philosophy', for you it was always 'western philoso...hy'. Whiteness, otherness, margins, decentring: it was obvious to me . . . ...hat presuppositions you were seeking to dislodge" (412). Underlining the ...istorical responsibility of Western philosophy, Derrida uses "history against ...hilosophy: when confronted with essentialist, idealizing theories and claims ...o ahistorical or transhistorical understanding, he asserts the historicity of ...hese discourses and theoretical assumptions" (Culler 129). At the same time, ...e rejects an uncritical examination of history and turns to a philosophical ...ritique of personal and collective history. Hence his approach to autobiog...raphy both engages a philosophical inquiry and is historically grounded. He ...nsettles the hierarchy between essence and supplement, and he rewrites his...ory while recognizing that the very model of history is a product of the his...ory that he wants to rewrite (Young 412). Derrida's purpose is not to reduce ...utobiography and philosophy to one and the same, but to tease their bound...aries. He seeks to find "a place from which the history of this frontier could ...e thought or even displaced—in writing itself and not only by historical or ...heoretical reflection" (Derrida, "This Strange Institution" 34). Derrida calls ...o question our commitment to generic and disciplinary boundaries, and ...raws attention to the complex dynamics at work in writing in general.

One strategy Derrida uses to reveal these dynamics is to elaborate on the ...wo tendencies at work in the act of writing: "the self-reflexive strata of texts ...n the one hand, and on the other the textual operations in the background ...hat both permit such reflection and prevent it from finally coinciding with ...self" (Gasché 290). The text's claim to a circumscribed discourse or mode of ...elf-representation is overrun by the entire system of the text's own resources

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and displacements. Hence, no self-representation can coincide with itself to constitute itself as presence. This double and contradictory movement in writing reveals the tension between textual intentionality and the final fulfillment of the text's intended effect. It shows that a text may present itself within a decipherable generic context and yet be prone to "the disruption, in the last analysis, of the authority of the code as a finite system of rules; at the same time, the radical destruction of any context as the protocol of code" (Derrida, "Signature" 8). It is as an effect of the excess called into play by this disruption that entanglement comes into the picture to underline what is built into the entire enterprise of writing in a genre or thinking about generic taxonomy.

When elaborating on the double movement conditioned by writing, Derrida utilizes the concept of the "general text" (*le texte général*), which exceeds the traditional determination of text as totality. As Gasché notes, if text always implies an empirical closure of the unity of a corpus and the totality of its formal and thematic meanings, general text, "characterized by structures of referral without a referent" (281), is where this unity collapses. With a pre-ontological status, it functions as "a fabric of traces, a system of linking of traces, in other words a network of textual referrals (*renvois textuels*). Because of this . . . tissue of traces endlessly referring to something other than itself yet never to an extratext that would bring its referring function to a clear stop, the general text is by nature heterogeneous" (Gasché 289). Carrying within itself the law of its displacement and heterogeneity, the general text allows for a rupture of its context and lends itself to future recontextualizations. Derrida refers to this force of recontextualization as the grafting potential of language, which overflows the boundaries established by generic protocols and turns writing into a practice "which is more potent than its so-called agents or institutors" (Smith 136). It is this force that reinscribes the discourses of autobiography or philosophy into their margins, "unsettles their pretensions to authority and autonomy, and 'grounds' them in what they do not control" (Gasché 260). If writing can no longer locate its source in a self-identical discourse but rather in self-differentiating textual operations, then it cannot be essential. It is bound—like identity—to be impure. In the absence of a transcendent center of origin, where further signification and transformation of a structure's contents are always possible, writing—including autobiography and philosophical *écriture*—finds the source of its creative potential in this impurity.

Monolingualism of the Other sets a good example for textual heterogeneity and impurity as it complicates the identifiable boundaries of philosophy and autobiography. Derrida sees the philosophical system rooted in the biography of the author and challenges the presumption that "from the moment one speaks of signature or of autobiographeme, one is no longer in the

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philosophical field" (*Points* 135). In contrast to most thinkers from the Western metaphysical tradition, he does not impose "an invisible or *indivisible* trait standing between the enclosure of philosophemes, on the one hand, and the life of an author already identifiable behind the name, on the other" (Derrida, "Otobiographies" 5). The signature becomes a compelling issue in *Monolingualism*, where theoretical reflections on linguistic and cultural identity cannot be disentangled from Derrida's own linguistic acculturation in Algeria. As he puts it, "In a minimal autobiographical trait can be gathered the greatest potentiality of historical, theoretical, linguistic, philosophical culture" ("This Strange Institution" 43), and it is this culture that is recollected in *Monolingualism*.

NOSTALGERIA: DERRIDA, THE EXEMPLARY FRANCO-MAGHREBIAN

Monolingualism was initially composed as a conference paper to be presented at a colloquium hosted by Édouard Glissant in 1992 at Louisiana State University. The conference titled "Echoes from Elsewhere"/"*Renvois d'ailleurs*" addressed *francophonie* outside France within the comparative framework of language, politics, and culture. It is no wonder that one of Derrida's most explicitly autobiographical texts was composed in response to colleagues' inquiries at this conference, since he often produced writing as countersignatures, in a "sort of animal moment" that "seeks to appropriate what always comes, always, from an *external* provocation" (Derrida, *Points* 352). The starting point of this conference was a dialogue initiated between Derrida and his friends, including Abdelkebir Khatibi, the Moroccan writer and literary critic. Thus what we encounter in *Monolingualism* is not an autobiographer who tells the story of his life to himself. In question is a dialogic autobiography in which the author begins and ends the *récit* in a colloquial mode. Derrida structures this work as an anti-autobiographical autobiography, which resembles a "counter-institutional institution [that] can be both subversive and conservative" ("This Strange Institution" 58). *Monolingualism* mimics the autobiographical genre to critique its self-centered structure and replaces the author's autonomy with two asymmetrical voices that testify to the division of the same. The responsibility to inscribe oneself in relation to the other brings to the surface the entanglement at work in the signatorial event.

Monolingualism performs on at least three levels. First, Derrida scrutinizes the fantasy of the proper in self-relation by sustaining a dialogue between two interlocutors who hold on to an "'internal' polylogue" ("This Strange Institution" 36). Second, *Monolingualism* gives an account of the linguistic and political acculturation Derrida underwent as a young Algerian Jew in Algiers in the 1940s to show how his philosophical views are so influenced by his

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biography. Yet, at the same time, he engages with life narrative in an ironic manner and casts a skeptical eye on one's attachment to linguistic and cultural identity. Finally, *Monolingualism* trespasses generic boundaries: "Already we'd have trouble not spotting but separating out historical narrative, literary fiction, and philosophical reflexion" (35).

In the initial pages of *Monolingualism*, we encounter the quasi-dramatic enactment of a dialogue between two interlocutors who systematically disrupt each other's program, as if they emerge from "some powerful utterance-producing machine that programs the movements of the two opposing forces at once" (Derrida, "Otobiographies" 29). Reenacting the otobiographical interplay between self and other, one voice articulates a message and the ear of the other receives the message and responds to it. The contradiction of the double in *Monolingualism* conditions the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play. In this "double-tongued text" (Bennington 153), Derrida contests the traditional philosophical opposition whereby we deal not "with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand" (Derrida, *Positions* 41). He unsettles this violent hierarchy by laying out aporias and claiming that there is no responsibility without the destabilizing experience of aporia.

The dialogue resembles, in part, the Socratic dialogue. In *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin writes that in the Socratic dialogue, "The dialogic means of seeking truth is counterposed to official monologism" (110). The two basic devices used in the Socratic dialogue are "syncrisis," or the "juxtaposition of various views," and "anacrisis," the "means for eliciting and provoking the words of one's interlocutor, forcing him to express his opinion and express it thoroughly" (Bakhtin 110). The reader can trace something akin to these two devices in *Monolingualism*, where the interlocutors contest each other's statements, interrupting the moment of self-closure. While one interlocutor makes a seemingly paradoxical statement based on personal experience and dwells in the experience of the undecidable, the other accuses him of committing a logical contradiction:

> *"Yes, I only have one language, yet it is not mine."*
>
> —You speak the impossible. Your speech does not hold water. . . . You are putting forward a sort of solemn attestation that stupidly drags itself by the heels into a logical contradiction. . . . It is as if, in one and the same breath, you were lying by confessing the lie. . . .
>
> —Is that so? But then why would they not stop? . . . Even you cannot seem to manage to convince yourself, and you multiply your objection, always making the same one, and exhausting yourself in redundancy. (*Monolingualism* 2–3)

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Derrida preserves this dialogic state until the very end of the book. The voices continue to interrupt one another without reaching a resolution. While one interlocutor dwells on this subject of alienation and states that he possesses only one language that is not his, the other finds the statement to be a "logical absurdity," a "'performative contradiction'" (3). Hence the former defends his case by making a demonstration, where the only evidence of his proposition's credibility is his testimony. In the dialogue between the interlocutors, the closest one comes to truth is through attestation. The question of credibility draws attention to the undecidable boundary between factual/fictional, logical/believable, leading to the conclusion that "truth remains bound to its spectral relationship with the lie. The co-implication of truth and falsity does not mean that truth receives its identity from its opposite, but that truth, like testimony, is a performative act" (Kronick 1002). By setting up a dialogue where autobiographical anamnesis and philosophical argumentation merge, Derrida draws attention to the performative and testimonial dimension that philosophy shares in common with autobiography. He foregrounds the interlocuters' promise to *make* truth rather than to *make known* what is true.

Derrida's emphasis on testimony leads to difficult reflections on bearing witness. The interlocutors dwell in a space of relation, where "the shuttle of negotiation is precisely between affirmation and position" (Derrida, *Negotiations* 26). As one interlocutor casts a skeptical eye on the other's decisions arising "against a background of the undecideable" (*Monolingualism* 62) and excludes him from the institution of philosophy, the other responds in the following manner:

> Stop. Do not play that trick on us again, please. . . . Certain German or Anglo-American theorists believe they have discovered an unanswerable strategy there. . . . Its mechanism amounts roughly to this: "Ah! So you ask yourself questions about truth. . . . Come on! you are a skeptic, a relativist, a nihilist; you are not a serious philosopher! If you continue, you will be placed in a department of rhetoric or literature." (*Monolingualism* 4)

Derrida's purpose in parodying the suggested theorists is to show that his interest does not lie in dismantling the notion of truth and embracing relativism. On the contrary, he consistently insists upon our obligation to truthfulness. What he illustrates is that "deconstruction (we should once again remind those who do not want to read) is neither negative nor nihilistic" (Derrida, "Eating Well" 108–09). It is not a technical operation intended to destroy systems but "a consequence of the fact that the system is impossible; it often consists, regularly or recurrently, in making appear—in each alleged system. . . —a force of dislocation, a limit in the totalization" (Derrida and

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Ferraris 4). Derrida exposes the reader to this limit, by exposing the undecidability in the autobiographical-philosophical text and by reminding the reader that where we think of testimony, we need to join the thinking of truth and fiction. As he notes, "every constative is rooted in the presupposition of an at least implicit performative. . . . I can always lie and bear false witness, right there where I say to you . . . 'I tell you the truth'" ("Typewriter Ribbon" 111). Hence when one testifies, "one can *testify* only to the unbelievable. To what can, at any rate, only be believed . . . beyond the limits of proof" (*Monolingualism* 20). By exposing the limit in the totalization, the un/believable points beyond the limits of presence into the future.

In addition to elaborating on testimony and accountability, Derrida relies heavily on irony to show the force of dislocation in the philosophical system. Just as he imitates autobiography to maneuver the genre differently, he uses philosophical language to propose what the "circular law with which philosophy is familiar" (*Monolingualism* 11) cannot untangle. His auto-exposition neither subordinates the irreducibility of his singular account to the general, nor escapes the generalizing force of philosophical argumentation entirely. Rather he oscillates between singularity and generality, positioning himself as both unique and exemplary. On the one hand, he identifies himself as the host who desires to offer an idiomatic account; on the other hand, his account is breached by generality at the moment it falls into language and is heard by other ears, turning him into a hostage. "Thus interbreeding and accumulating the two logics, that of exemplarity and that of the host as hostage" (20), Derrida makes the following ironic statement: "we will affirm then that the one who is *most*, most purely, or most rigorously, most essentially, Franco-Maghrebian would allow us to decipher *what it is to be* Franco-Maghrebian *in general*" (11). Despite the desire for an idiomatic mark, singularity and generality remain tangled in an irresolvable tension. This irresolvable tension is of utmost importance, for it enables Derrida to archive diverse voices and interpretive possibilities. His concern with testimony, as Dooley and Kavanagh note, is always about "an ethics and a politics of memory . . . essentially the desire to do justice to the *other*" (107). Such an ethics of memory requires the autobiographer to remain critical of closed identitarianism. Thus while questioning the meaning of being Franco-Maghrebian, Derrida focuses on the fissures and paradoxes of identity rather than construing a self-same identity through the memories he recollects.

The statement "*I only have one language, yet it is not mine*" becomes the focal point of *Monolingualism*. Derrida dwells on his relationship to the French language within the context of the French colonization of Algeria. Despite the fact that French is his mother tongue, he recalls feeling that this language

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was not his own, as if it were a stepmother tongue he felt distanced from. This dislocation arose because "the manner in which the French language was taught, the norms of 'proper' speaking and writing, the references to literature, all made it pretty clear that the model was in France—and not just in France, but in Paris" (Derrida and Ferraris 38). In the opening pages of *Monolingualism*, Derrida classifies the French speakers he met at the colloquium in Louisiana into three categories: Francophone French speakers who are not Maghrebian (from France), Francophones who are neither French nor Maghrebian (for example, the Swiss), and French-speaking Maghrebians who have never been French citizens (for example, Moroccans). As he does not fall under any one of these categories, Derrida makes the following ironic remark to his friend Abdelkebir Khatibi: "You see, dear Abdelkebir, between the two of us, I consider myself to be the *most* Franco-Maghrebian, and perhaps even the *only* Franco-Maghrebian here" (*Monolingualism* 12). Contrasting himself to Khatibi, who was born into a household where Arabic was the primary language, Derrida notes that growing up speaking French in colonized Algeria complicates his understanding of the mother tongue.

Born in El-Biar, near Algiers, in 1930, Derrida came from a family that had first migrated to Algeria as part of the French-speaking Sephardic Jewish community from Spain (Bennington and Derrida 325) to which the Crémieux Decree had granted French citizenship in 1870. After being French citizens for over half a century, the same community was deprived of their citizenship between 1941 and 1943, in the midst of the Nazi occupation of France, without "*gaining back any other citizenship. No other*" (*Monolingualism* 15). This loss of citizenship marks Derrida's first exilic experience. As he writes, "citizenship does not define a cultural, linguistic, or, in general, historical participation. It does not cover all these modes of belonging" (14–15). Yet he also emphasizes that "it is not some superficial or superstructural predicate floating on the surface of experience" (15). Thus the reference to citizenship at the beginning of *Monolingualism* alludes to both the fantasy of a motherland and the sense of exile Derrida experienced on linguistic and cultural levels.

The loss of French citizenship by the French-speaking Jews of Algeria implied that

> being already strangers to the roots of French culture, even if that was their only acquired culture, their only educational instruction, and, especially, their only language, being strangers, still more radically, for the most part, to Arab or Berber cultures, the greater majority of these young "indigenous Jews" remained, in addition, strangers to Jewish culture. (*Monolingualism* 53)

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The first "wound," as far as Derrida recalls, was inflicted on him when he was expelled from school and sent home in 1942 for being Jewish. As he puts it, "through that wound there was ensconced in me a certain conscious-unconscious way of looking at intellectual matters—at culture and the language problem" (Derrida and Ferraris 37). Derrida was Jewish but did not speak Hebrew or Yiddish; he grew up in Algeria but did not speak Arabic or Berber. He was estranged from his religious community due to the anti-Semitism in the pro-Nazi regime, yet neither did he belong to the group of "Algerians proper, in the sense of coming from the indigenous Arab, Berber, Kabyle, Chaouia, or Mzabite peoples" (Young 414). Moreover, he participated in an education system that repeatedly asserted that his motherland was France and his mother tongue French, despite the fact that he "had still never gone 'to France'" (*Monolingualism* 16). Whereas French and Latin were obligatory in schools, Arabic was offered as an optional course along with English and German. Berber was not even mentioned. As a result of growing up amid all these languages and "interdicts" in the educational system (37), Derrida did not develop a sense of belonging that could be entirely monolingual or monocultural. His estrangement from French language left a "phantomatical map 'inside' the said monolanguage" as if "translation translates itself in an internal (Franco-French) translation by playing with the non-identity with itself of all language" (65). If language is one of the main determinants of national identity, then the first complication in Derrida's life began with this uncertain relationship between language and motherland.

Derrida's motive for giving such weight to language in *Monolingualism* is both to demonstrate the tangle of language and identity, and to stress the fact that where even one's primary or mother tongue does not provide a sense of "being at home," defining oneself through linguistic and cultural appropriation becomes problematic.

> For never was I able to call French, this language I am speaking to you, "my mother tongue."
>
> . . . I leave to others the words "my mother tongue."
>
> . . . My culture was right away a political culture. "My mother tongue" is what they say, what they speak; as for me, I cite and question them. . . . Especially when, so lightly, they celebrate "fraternity." At bottom, brothers, the mother tongue, and so forth pose the same problem. (*Monolingualism* 34)

In reaction to such claims of ownership, Derrida places emphasis on the structural limits of our possession of an originary linguistic and cultural identity. The only language he speaks also alienated him, which implies that "this abiding 'alienation' [*aliénation à demeure*] appears, like 'lack,' to be constitutive

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... it lacks nothing that precedes or follows it, it alienates no *ipseity*, no property, and no self that has ever been able to represent its watchful eye" (*Monolingualism* 25). As Derrida notes, "From all viewpoints, which are not just grammatical, logical, or philosophical, it is well known that the I of the kind of anamnesis called autobiographical, the I [*je-me*] of I recall [*je me rappelle*] is produced and uttered in different ways depending on the language in question" (29). If there is no metalanguage, but only the "relays of metalanguage within' a language," then the I never precedes the pre-egological ipseity of language and "is not independent of language in general" (22, 29).

That the textual "I" does not exist prior to the autobiographical inscription is a point that many contemporary scholars of autobiography from Eakin to G. Thomas Couser have also elaborated. As Couser notes in *Memoir: An Introduction*, "life narrative does not just *issue* from preexisting and interiorized selves; rather, it helps to develop and define them" (25). As Eakin also observes, "narrative is not merely a literary form but a mode of phenomenological and cognitive self-experience, while self—the self as autobiographical discourse—does not necessarily precede its constitution in narrative" (*How* 100). While these scholars emphasize the role of narrative as a means by which the autobiographical self is constituted, Derrida focuses particularly on the role of the *language* in which narrative is structured. The "exemplary" Franco-Maghrebian he portrays in *Monolingualism* cannot be thought of as existing independently from French language and the cultural-political history attached to it.

To further accentuate the interdependency of language and identity, Derrida calls attention to the "Frenchifying" effect of French language that left an almost physical imprint on him. As he notes, a literary capital of France in exile was constituted in Algiers in 1942, which brought him ever closer to French literature and philosophy that "harpooned" him like

> wooden or metallic darts [*flèches*], a penetrating body of enviable, formidable, and inaccessible words even when they were entering me, sentences which it was necessary to appropriate, domesticate, coax [*amadouer*], that is to say, love by setting on fire... perhaps destroy, in all events mark, transform, prune, cut, forge, graft at the fire. (*Monolingualism* 50–51)

The physical appropriation of language turns his body into a palimpsest on which the French culture is inscribed: "when we mention the body, we are naming the body of language and writing, as well as what makes them a thing of the body" (*Monolingualism* 27). His linguistic acculturation renders visible two different dynamics at work. First, it reveals a colonial acculturation, manifesting the scars written over the body of the colonial subject—"the experience of the injury, the offense, vengeance, and the lesion," and

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"the traumatizing brutality of what is called modern colonial war" (26, 39). Second, it raises questions about the colonial aspect of all culture and forms of acculturation. As Derrida remarks, "All culture is originarily colonial. . . . Every culture institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some 'politics' of language" (39). This statement may appear controversial, for Derrida addresses, at once, the historical specificity of the French colonization of Algeria, and the more abstract relationship between linguistic acculturation and colonialism. Furthermore, Derrida's statement may invite objections, for, if his line of reasoning were to be followed, Indigenous cultures can only be said to be "colonial" in the most abstract sense. Yet resisting accusations that he may be "confusing it all" (40), Derrida accentuates the "politics of language" which is not only at work in colonized countries like Algeria. He argues that the "monolingualism imposed by the other operates . . . through a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial, which tends, repressively and irrepressibly, to reduce language to the One, that is, to the hegemony of the homogeneous" (39–40). Derrida gives the hegemony of French in France as an example:

> We know how that went with French in France itself, in revolutionary France as much as, or more than, in monarchical France. This sovereign establishment . . . may be open, legal, armed, or cunning, disguised under alibis of "universal" humanism, and sometimes of the most generous hospitality. It always follows or precedes culture like its shadow. (*Monolingualism* 39)

For Derrida, who admits to having "experienced colonial cruelty from two sides" (*Monolingualism* 39), the monolingualism of the other then has a second meaning: "in any case we speak only one language—and that we do not *own* it . . . since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for *the other*, from the other, kept by the other" (40). Although French was supposed to be his maternal tongue, its "source, norms, rules, and law were situated elsewhere. . . . In the Capital-City-Mother-Fatherland," in a "place of fantasy, therefore, at an ungraspable distance" (41, 42). Given the "destinerrancy" (Derrida, "Circumfession" 314) he experiences via language, whose origin is always already established "elsewhere," Derrida leaves us with the following questions: "In what language does one write memoirs when there has been no authorized mother tongue? How does one utter a worthwhile 'I recall' when it is necessary to invent both one's language and one's 'I', to invent them *at the same time*, beyond this surging wave of anamnesia . . . ?" (*Monolingualism* 31).

Derrida asserts that singular memories he remembers cannot possibly recover an originary Franco-Maghrebian identity. This is not only because any origin is always already located elsewhere, but also because, as James Olney remarks in *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing*, "Memory spreads

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over the text of our lives for us to read again and again, but I would recall and reemphasize the etymological origin of *text* in *texere*, 'to weave', for the text is never fixed or single: it is ever rewoven, constantly renewed or reconstructed" (344). Like *bios*, the "text of memory" and the "text of narrative" are thus amenable to constant revision (419). For this reason, Derrida admits that "anamnesis would be risky . . . I'd like to escape my own stereotypes" ("This Strange Institution" 34). What he achieves by the end of his autobiographical-philosophical exercise is but "a vague *resemblance* to myself" (*Monolingualism* 58). Autobiographical *récit* is not so much about the recollection of the essence of the writing subject as it is about the "secrets of unreadability" (73), which is why at the end of another autobiographical exercise Derrida confesses that it is "too late, you are less, you, less than yourself" ("Circumfession" 314).

Monolingualism reveals the double attempt and failure to capture a sealed interiority, and leads to some compelling questions about purity of identity and writing. On the level of self-accounting, any assertion of self that emerges gets dispersed and redistributed from out of the enclosed past into the open future. What begins as an autobiographical-philosophical account ends with an emphasis on the complex relationship between politics of language and difficulties of identification instead of a distinct articulation of the author's subjectivity. On a generic level, the text operates as a monstrous hybrid, at once autobiographical and philosophical. What Derrida writes of *Glas* holds true for *Monolingualism* as well: the text

> circulates between these two genres, trying meanwhile to produce another text which would be of another genre or without genre. . . . if one insists on defining genres at all costs, one could refer historically to Menippean satire, to "anatomy" (as in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*), or to something like philosophic parody where all genres—poetry, philosophy, theater, et cetera—are summoned up at once. ("Roundtable on Translation" 140–41)

Just as Derrida participates in Sephardic-Judeo-Algerian-French cultures without ever fully belonging to any of them, his writing participates in a number of genres while recognizing that "such a participation never amounts to belonging" (Derrida, "Law of Genre" 230). Rather than assembling his work under the rubric of a singular genre, Derrida focuses on the generative potential of writing that gives rise to "a graft of several genres" ("Roundtable on Translation" 141). Perhaps one could even argue that Derrida uses language, more than himself, as the agent here. Through its "transformations, expropriation . . . a-nomie and de-regulation" (*Monolingualism* 65), language challenges the economy of non-contamination. It is as if not to let

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language overwhelm generic boundaries would be violence toward the "incomprehensible guest" (51) that language awaits.

Derrida shifts his focus from the notion of an originary identity to the process of identification, from the accountability of the written product to the process of writing. His critique of essentialist taxonomies, through a depiction of obstacles and entanglements, radically transforms the way we conceptualize presence. *Monolingualism* accommodates the productive interplay of subjectivities and genres, regenerating them toward a future without an "eschatological *content*" (*Monolingualism* 68). He thus adds with irony, "I therefore venture to present myself to you here, ecce homo, in parody, as the exemplary Franco-Maghrebian, but disarmed, with accents that are more naïve, less controlled, and less polished" (19).[4] Derrida's testimony is less controlled, because he is at once making a confession and does not know where the confession will lead him. His autobiographical excursion is a "scene without a theatre," a scene whose eventfulness is determined by "the extent to which that scene betrays" him (72, 73). Constantly thrown against the obstacle to auto-exposition, as if in "a serious traffic accident about which I never cease thinking" (70),[5] he construes a narrative about the self, whose secret "no other person could really appropriate. Not even I, who would, however, be in on the secret. I must still dream about it, in my 'nostalgeria'" (52). His nostalgeria ultimately takes him to a state of being at home in exile. If there is no "*testimonial deus ex machina*" (Derrida, *Acts of Religion* 66), which can give access to a "possible habitat without the difference of this exile and this nostalgia" (*Monolingualism* 58), then where does the autobiographer turn in order to recuperate his origins? As Derrida asks, "Where do we find ourselves? With whom can we still *identify* in order to affirm our own identity and to tell ourselves our own history?" (55).

At the end of his account, Derrida admits: "A Judeo-Franco-Maghrebian genealogy does not clarify everything, far from it. But could I explain anything without it, ever?" (*Monolingualism* 71–72). His autobiographical practice takes him toward a destination where he "never knows in the present, with present knowledge" (Derrida, "Otobiographies" 9). Ultimately, his genealogical impulse does not lead to the recuperation of an originary identity but to prosthesis of origin. Despite the fact that memory fails to recover what is lost, he does not give up the desire to mourn the fractured past. Derrida refers to "transvoided" memory as "a strangely bottomless alienation of the soul: a catastrophe . . . [and] a paradoxical opportunity" (*Monolingualism* 53). Like the obstacle to auto-exposition, transvoided memory is both an opportunity and a catastrophe, because without a risk of failure of memory, there can be no history.

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NOTES

1. The notion of autothanatography has also been widely discussed by Nancy K. Miller and Susanna Egan. Whereas Miller remarks that every autobiography can also be considered an autothanatography, for we live with an awareness of imminent death and prospective nonexistence (12), Egan utilizes the term in exploring narratives that focus on the process of dying, paying particular attention to narratives of terminal illness in *Mirror Talk*.

2. All emphasis in subsequent quotations appear in the original sources.

3. The double movement of desire and failure can be understood in relation to Derrida's discussion of the Freudian game *fort/da* in *The Post Card*. The game involves a child playing with a spool, repeating an operation that consists in distancing the object in order to observe that he brings it back. What matters is not the object of desire, but the desire itself, which propels a movement between *need* and *distance*, appropriation and expropriation. According to Derrida, "every autobiography is the departure/return of a *fort/da*" as "autobiography *of the writing* posits and deposits simultaneously, in the same movement, the psychoanalytic movement" (*The Post Card* 322, 303).

4. The reference to Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (1908) provides the context for this book with regard to its subversion of the conventions of the autobiographical genre and the play with multiple signatures.

5. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche uses a similar analogy to critique the economy of self-presence in the autobiographical act, writing, "I am always equal to accidents: I have to be unprepared to be the master of myself" (227).

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REVIEWS

Galawdewos. *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros: A Seventeenth-Century African Biography of an Ethiopian Woman*. Translated and edited by Wendy Laura Belcher and Michael Kleiner, Princeton UP, 2015. xxxii + 500 pp. ISBN 978-0691164212, $39.95.

Ethiopia is home to one of the most ancient forms of Christianity, the history of which can be traced to the fourth century. The classical language of Ethiopia, Ge'ez, preserves a large body of indigenous literature of religious and secular importance, as well as many early Jewish and Christian texts translated from Egyptian Copto-Arabic exemplars. Original composition in the classical language continued into the early modern period in a range of genres, among the most popular of which were saints' lives, developed in the distinctive Ethiopian genre of *gädl*, as reflected in the text translated here as *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros*.

The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros is an important witness to conflicts between Ethiopian Christians and proto-colonial Portuguese missions. In the 1520s and 1530s, the Habäša people became increasingly concerned with the advance of Islamic armies in Africa and, consequently, appealed to the Portuguese for help. After the Portuguese intervened, Jesuit missionaries set about attempting to convert the Habäša to Catholicism, hoping to rid them not only of their miaphysite (single nature) theology about the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ (which they share with Egyptian, Armenian, and Syrian churches), but also of their traditional customs that set them apart even from other miaphysite Christians, such as refusing pork and rabbit, keeping the Sabbath on Saturday and Sunday, and not baptizing children until the fortieth day. A new king, Susenyos, converted to Catholicism (he was from a non-Habäša people) and, with the Jesuits, tried to enforce conversion. The mission was culturally insensitive and met with widespread resistance from "among Habäša military ranks" (7) and among numerous Habäša noblewomen (7–10), foremost among whom was Walatta Petros (1592–1642 CE). The Catholic mission failed catastrophically, and no colonial attempt was made for another 250 years.

Published by Princeton University Press, this deluxe edition of *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros* is illustrated with 60 color images

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from four Ethiopic manuscripts. It is also a technically demanding one (not least due to the complicated transliteration system and the Ethiopian Fidäl script), and the editors and press have produced it beautifully. Wendy Laura Belcher's introduction to the text covers the historical context and the distinctive features of the genre of *gädl*, which Belcher and Kleiner translate as "Life-Struggles" or, alternatively, "Life and Struggles." Belcher also discusses the manuscripts used for the translation based on painstaking collations of some dozen manuscripts (49–60). Belcher's description of the great efforts needed to produce this edition will be valuable to the many readers who do not come to this text familiar with the methods and complexities of manuscript editing and text criticism.

The main audience for this thorough edition will likely be historians and students of ancient and medieval hagiography, as well as historians of early colonialism in Africa. For such readers, this edition offers rich resources for the study of Christian biography in Africa. On the other hand, the claim that this hagiography (which strikes me as typical in most ways of the genre) will aid "those seeking to problematize ideas of authorship, both supporting and challenging Saussurean ideas about language, not authors, speaking and Barthesian ideas about authors as facilitators not originators" seems rather unlikely (41).

The edition itself is of a very high quality, although, since I do not read Ge'ez, I was unable to check or verify the translations. I will say, however, that the translation is exceptionally fluid throughout and heavily annotated. The translators identify biblical quotations, gloss names, traditions, and other matters that would not be clear to those unfamiliar with Ethiopia, and they note when they are translating more idiomatically, giving a literal translation in the notes. This is a critical translation: although the Ethiopic text is not edited, the notes contain the collation of the manuscript evidence with variants given in transliterated Ge'ez and sometimes in Fidäl script. Such notes are extensive, often taking up half of a given page, even though most of them (especially the text's critical notes) will rarely be consulted by most readers of this volume. For readers of Ge'ez, the notes will be useful in the absence of a new critical edition to replace Conti Rossini's outdated 1912 edition.

In addition to the "Life and Struggles" (77–272), Belcher and Kleiner include translations of the (posthumous) "Miracles of Walatta Petros," which in several recensions follows the "Life and Struggles" in manuscripts (273–348), some short notes from two manuscripts on the history of Walatta Petros's community (349–52), and two poems in honor of the saint (353–89). The poems are translated in an idiomatic English version and in a literal interlineal translation along with the poem in the Fidäl script and in transliteration.

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Belcher concludes the volume with a comprehensive and extremely useful glossary of people, places, and terms (395–469).

Although Walatta Petros's role in resisting the proto-colonial mission of the Jesuits will likely be of greatest interest, it forms a relatively small part of *The Life and Struggles* (119–84). The remainder of the hagiography focuses on her establishing monastic communities, maintaining ascetic discipline, and performing many miracles, great and small. Another area that the authors highlight as of special interest is Walatta Petros's relationship with another ascetic, Eheta Kristos. Belcher describes them as "involved in a lifelong partnership of deep, romantic friendship" (39). Their "first encounter is rapturous," love at first sight (39). Belcher insists that they should not be considered lesbians, since the term is anachronistic, but their same-sex desire was real, and, in fact, Walatta Petros may have "struggled" with her desires, given her strict discipline of celibacy (39–40). Such an interpretation might benefit revisiting. The pair's professions of mutual love do not strike me as "romantic" or out of place in the context of eastern Christian saints' lives, which speak of intense and effusively expressed emotional bonds between masters and disciples that would seem excessive today. Furthermore, in a telling passage Eheta Kristos twice refers to her saintly soul mate as her mother (as does the narrator Galawdewos), which seems odd within an allegedly "romantic" if celibate relationship (164). But this is a minor point in *The Life and Struggles*, which is more interested in Walatta Petros's miraculous activities: she produces miraculous food and firewood, learns a new language instantly, sees clairvoyantly, and lives in harmony with wild beasts, to take a few examples. This saint's life is skillfully told.

The editors cannot be expected to include everything in a single volume, but their reading of the hagiography would be enriched by more attention to the genre that Galawdewos (in Latin, Claudius) is working in, not just the Ethiopic tradition of saints' lives and miracle stories, which Belcher covers (22–26), but the traditions of late antique and medieval hagiography that Galawdewos draws on. There is a long history of resistance among miaphysite Christians against the imperial or European-backed diophysite forces that had triumphed at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, within which women have a long history of leadership. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, John of Ephesus (c. 507–586) describes the actions of the Roman (or Byzantine) Empress Theodora (c. 500–547), a staunch miaphysite partisan, to expand and defend miaphysite orthodoxy in Africa. Theodora undermined her diophysite husband Justinian's mission to convert Nubia by subterfuge, sending her own competing missionaries and conspiring to delay her husband's rival company. The miaphysites entered Nubia first and thus lay the foundation for the

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Nubian kingdoms' centuries of Christian practice in the miaphysite tradition, alongside their Ethiopian neighbors to the south. The Near East also witnessed spirited resistance against the religion of empire and Europe, and, not coincidentally, powerful women played important roles in that resistance. In his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, John of Ephesus again details the lives of saints like Euphemia, Mary, and Susan, who took on leadership roles in a normally patriarchal church in resisting Byzantine imperial persecution (Harvey 108–31). While Belcher occasionally links *The Life and Struggles* to earlier, non-Ethiopian literature, such as when she notes that a high percentage of early martyrs were African, important, direct connections with other Christian literatures of the Near East are left unexplored in the volume's lengthy introductory and contextual sections.[1]

Earlier eastern Christian literature could also enrich our understanding of Walatta Petros's biography and personality. In some cases, *The Life and Struggles* appears to play on venerable hagiographical tropes, including the saint's beauty and wealthy upbringing. The first monastic hagiography (*The Life of Antony* [written c. 356]) makes much of the saint's wealth and his abandonment of it. Yet Belcher attempts to explain away this apparent hagiographical cliché in Walatta Petros's *Life* in naturalistic terms, as she also does with the saint's miracles (27–28). It makes me wonder about other tropes in *The Life and Struggles*, such as Walatta Petros's beauty, which was widely expected of saintly virgins (such as in the *Life and Teachings of St. Syncletica*): are wealthy saints more likely to be prettier than the poor? The same goes for the narrative of Walatta Petros's mother's difficulty in conception, which culminates in her dedicating her daughter to God, a commonplace drawn from the biblical story of Hannah and Samuel, the Protevangelion of James, and other influential texts. Yet Belcher suggests that this extraordinarily ancient pious cliché is intuitively or statistically likely to be a historical fact of her "hagiobiography," an uncommon term that Belcher and Kleiner do not define (7; *pace* Belcher 2).

Belcher also makes much of Walatta Petros's unyielding and demanding personality as a religious leader and contrasts this with Catholic and Protestant expectations of female saints: she is not "nice" (37). It's not clear which hagiographies she is referring to (especially since Protestant Christianity lacks much of a hagiographical tradition), but saintly women in the Christian traditions who are linked historically and culturally to Ethiopia are also not always "nice." The anti-imperial saints Mary and Euphemia mentioned above could be "abrasive" (Harvey 124). And the Desert Mothers of Egyptian monasticism, such as Syncletica and Theodora, were certainly not "sweetly kind" (37), nor was Perpetua, the Carthaginian martyr whose partly autobiographical *Passion* Belcher cites as a possible first "African" life about an "African woman" (30).

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Reading *The Life and Struggles of Walatta Petros*, I couldn't help but think of that saint of the Egyptian Orthodox Church, Saint Shenoute the Great (fl. 385–465), famous for his strict discipline, his concern with moral uprightness among his monks and nuns, his use of corporal punishment, and his resistance to heretics and the rich and powerful, all found in Walatta Petros's *Life and Struggles*. I chided myself: was I seeing and privileging my own area of interest in evaluating a work that postdated Shenoute by more than a millennium? But then I saw that the panegyric poem *Portrait of Walatta Petros* opens with an invocation of Shenoute himself, who Belcher and Kleiner note was revered in the Ethiopian church (and his *Life* is preserved in an Ethiopic translation). There remains great potential for connecting the various traditions of Christian biography East and West with the Ethiopian hagiography of Walatta Petros (which can now be supplemented by the recently digitized *gädl* published by E. A. W. Budge over a century ago).

At times, Belcher describes the significance of *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros* as overturning a variety of assumptions that are hard for me to believe many potential readers of this volume could entertain.[2] Yet *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros* is an important text on its own, presented in an exemplary fashion, and worthy of attention by any interested in early colonialism in Africa and the biographies of female religious in Africa and beyond. Belcher and Kleiner have done a great service in making this literature accessible in a responsible and scholarly form to a wider readership.

NOTES

1. Here, "African" refers to North African Latin-speaking Romans with no cultural connection to Ethiopia (30).
2. Examples of these assumptions include that Africans were not writing books in indigenous languages prior to European missions (2), or that homosexuality did not exist in Ethiopia prior to European contact (40), or that women did not play important leadership roles in Africa (3).

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Andrew Crislip

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Anshu Malhotra and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, editors. *Speaking of the Self: Gender, Performance, and Autobiography in South Asia*. Duke UP, 2015. 312 pp. ISBN 978-0822359913, $26.95.

Speaking of the Self takes up the ambitious task of rewriting the practice of autobiography research on South Asia. The point of departure for the ten studies making up the book lies at the intersection of gender and performance, two key theoretical concepts that serve as the backbone of the project. It is not surprising, therefore, that the question of how these concepts both shape women's autobiographical narratives in South Asia and impact their study emerges again and again in all the essays that make up this collection, setting up a coherent and interactive dialogue that engages readers interested in autobiography, women, gender, literature, or regional studies.

Each chapter focuses on a different author (or cohort of authors)—predominantly women, but also two male actors playing women on stage or, as the author calls them, female impersonators (255)—and their autobiographical narratives. Besides narratives that could be termed "classical" within the Western tradition of life writing (for example, texts that are written down and subsequently published), we also encounter life narratives that are transmitted orally, composed in verses, constructed in stones, or given the form of different literary genres, which span centuries of practice of self-representation in India and ultimately challenge the canon of life writing. Not only is the range of autobiographers discussed in this volume diverse, as are the regions represented and the time periods covered, but the forms of autobiographical narratives those autobiographers employ are also varied, making this collection a treat to review.

The editors, Anshu Malhotra and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, succeed in presenting research on South Asia that plots in a broad time frame self-expressions that can be placed both inside and outside the genre of "classical" autobiography. The interdisciplinary character of the book is brought into sharp relief, on one hand, by the range of contributors—a couple of historians, an anthropologist, a feminist writer and publisher, and representatives of literary studies (working with Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Persian, and English)—and, on the other hand, by the amazing range of authors they investigate: a Mughal princess from the seventeenth century, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century courtesans from princely states, a Bengali housewife diarist of the first half of the nineteenth century, women novelists, male actors performing women's roles; and a twentieth-century nationalist.

As the offspring of an academic research network titled Women's Autobiography in Islamic Society, the collection is unsurprisingly inclined toward Muslim authors.[1] Intriguingly, some of them profess ambiguous religious

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affiliations, thus providing an opening for reflections on the performative aspect of religion itself. By contrast, just three of the auto-narratives examined in the volume have been authored by Hindus. However, the research project on women's autobiographies in Islamic societies, which seems to have played an important role in shaping the book, is mentioned only in the acknowledgments and is conspicuously absent from the otherwise well-balanced introduction, where the rationale for the selective representation of authors studied in *Speaking of the Self* could have been discussed at greater length. The matter is addressed only in passing, with the editors declaring,

> The list, however, is naturally selective. In part, it reflects the contributor's own research interest, but as this is a book that focuses primarily (but not entirely) on the written life, these subjects are, in turn, limited by the requirement of literacy, a marker that remained woefully low in South Asia until very recently and, indeed, still does in certain sectors. (2)

Be that as it may, the editorial choice of the material may inadvertently create an overall impression, especially among uninformed readers, that the majority of women's autobiographical narratives in South Asia have been authored by women who are Muslim.

The methodologically and academically grounded introduction sketches an outline of life writing's history in South Asia; stipulates details of research on autobiography in South Asian and Islamic contexts; and foregrounds theoretical frameworks conceptualizing the selection of the material within debates on performance, gender, subjectivity, agency, and memory. The editors draw from a variety of theoretical reflections on autobiography including Paul de Man's concepts of "prosopopeia" (14) and "defacement" (22), Philippe Lejeune's "autobiographical pact" (22), Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's deliberations on the heterogeneity of autobiographical practices by which marginalized subjects acquire agency (13), and Judith Butler's formulation of "gender performativity" (21). Here performativity is seen as a methodological tool "to appreciate the historical, social and cultural milieu in which the self was imbricated, and what enabled gendered subjectivity and speech" (1), and is aided by its contextualization within audience and mediators of autobiographical expressions. Other valuable references come from publications on autobiographical traditions in Islamic cultures (including Metcalf, Reynolds, and Booth) and in South Asia. The latter includes both volumes that collect essays on various authors like Arnold and Blackburn and case studies of individual autobiographers like Tanika Sarkar.

The select bibliography aptly provides sources on various aspects of South Asian life writing—still rather few in number as compared with the

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abundance of works on Western life writing, which makes the volume under review even more valuable—and their historical, cultural, political, religious, and social contexts, which may be of interest to researchers from many different disciplines. The extensive list of works cited demonstrates that the authors are well acquainted with various facets of interdisciplinary research on life writing both in the global context and with specific reference to South Asia.

Speaking of the Self focuses on some critical issues raised by earlier publications, providing arguments and illustrations in their support and taking some of them further. The collection follows the work of David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn in *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography and History*, and Kathryn Hansen in *Stages of Life: Indian Theatre Autobiographies*, namely their criticism of oversimplified concepts of a single group's dominance in the life narratives from South Asia and the presumed denial of the self in these narratives. Endorsing the critical approach of Dwight F. Reynolds in *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, as well as Arnold and Blackburn, the volume questions the purported lack of autobiographical expressions in non-Western cultures and the consequent presumption that the existing ones are exclusively the legacy of the West, which informs the perception that South Asian autobiographies are "immature and underdeveloped" (4). By providing research on various forms of auto-narratives from different historical periods in South Asia, seeing that "challenges involved in recovering women's voice should not indicate a lack of voice" (11), the text draws on Arnold and Blackburn to further sensitize readers to the persistent privileging of literature over orature, which is noteworthy in terms of the difficulties of researching personal narratives in South Asia, particularly women's stories (5).

The material is organized not chronologically but around the gender/performance axis of the collection's theoretical framework. Thus, the first part consists of four essays that focus on how women negotiate the autobiography genre; the second part contains three essays that discuss various forms of autobiographical narration outside the definition of the "classical" autobiography genre and its canon; and the final part brings three essays that oscillate between religion and gender as focus points of identity and their impact on self-representation and subjectivity.

In the essay that opens the first part, Sylvia Vatuk discusses how, in the excerpts of an unpublished memoir from the 1950s, certain references to Urdu literature clearly reflect Zakira Ghouse's self-fashioning. Vatuk produces a multilayered reading of the self in the text, a reading she makes as a foreign anthropologist conducting in-depth research on the role of women in the extended family of the author. Zakira Ghouse's running commentaries, which were taped during the audiorecording of the memoir in the 1980s, further

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explicate this research and her comprehensive answers to Vatuk's direct questions are even more elucidating. Ritu Menon's study of two autobiographies by Nayantara Sahgal (of the illustrious Nehru family) brings to the fore the conflict between the self and the projection of the self as mediated by a censorious society and publishers. Menon suggests that due to social and editorial pressures, the narrative of a consistent self is to be found in Sahgal's fiction rather than her so-called autobiographies. Asiya Alam examines a diary and memoir of Nazr Sajjad Hyder (1892–1967), as serialized in Urdu magazines, alongside a selection of her life writings that her daughter Qurratulain Hyder (herself an accomplished Urdu writer) produced. Alam concludes, "If diary, memoir, letters, and Qurratulain's reorganisation are all taken together the narrative becomes a kaleidoscope of its genres and contexts" (90). Alam—and Vatuk—underline self-effacement as a mode of self-expression in the South Asian context: "If self-effacement is the culturally acceptable and expected norm for women in South Asia, then the 'unveiling of her intimate feelings', her 'private' life not just to women who made up the reading public, but also to men illustrates her defiance of the social order" (89). Kailashbashini Debi (d. 1895), a Bengali housewife, and her diary are the focus of Shubhra Ray's essay. The autobiographical narrative is read here as a form of a woman's subtle resistance to the modernist-nationalist vision of Indian women's transformation and as such asserts her individual subjectivity and agency.

Uma Chakravati's reading of Urdu novels by Mumtaz Shah Nawaz, Khadija Mastur, and Zaheda Hina as "deeply autobiographical in sentiment" in relation to the trauma of British India's Partition opens the second part of the collection (123). Chakravati brings forward the polyvalence visible in processes of writing, reading, and researching autobiographical narratives:

> The choice of novels and the focus on Pakistani women's writings is itself an aspect of my "biography", an outcome of a phase in my life . . . when I taught women's history at a women's studies course in Lahore. . . . I was struck by the way in which the same traumatic Partition narratives, remembered from my childhood, were now coming back to me, but through being told from the "other" side. (123)

Chakravarti departs from this "three way interaction between the authors of novels, the female protagonists they created and [her] own investment in reading these" (137) and studies trauma narratives in relation to memory and culture: "It may be that through these narratives we can understand something about the cultural memory of the subcontinent in a way that helps us as individuals to mediate or modify difficult moments in our past" (123).

Shveta Sachdeva Jha and Afshan Bokhari foreground the fluidity of forms that South Asian women employ to assert the self outside the classical

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autobiography genre. Jha analyzes the writing of ghazals (classical form of Urdu poetry) along with acts of performance and patronage (the construction of water tanks and mosques) as practices of "choosing various modes of self-expression" (159) by a court courtesan from the princely state of Hyderabad, Mah Laqa Bai "Chanda" (1767–1824). Bokhari looks for the articulation of the autobiographical voice of a Moghul princess, Jahanara Begum (1614–1681), in works she composed (an anthology of writings on Sufi saints and a Sufi treatise on spirituality), and in the sacred architecture that she funded. Bokhari raises the question of the relativity of masculine and feminine modes of self-expression in a given historical period and cultural milieu:

> The masculine modes of Jahanara's subjectivity, expressed through her first-person historicised narratives as forms of history writing in her two Sufi treatises and her prominent mosque and khanaqah commissions successfully promoted the self, emperor and empire through the "appropriate" image or subjectivity of the male sovereign merged with perceptions and conceptions of Jahanara's social and spiritual personas. (196)

Both in her writings and in her patronage of public buildings, Jahanara draws subtly from the imperial narrative and creates her nuanced self-expression.

The third part of the volume opens with Anshu Malhotra's study of *160 Kafis* or traditional Punjabi verses composed by Piro (d. 1872)—a low-caste Muslim courtesan or "self-confessed prostitute" (205) who took shelter with a Sikh spiritual master, Guru Gulabdas. Malhotra examines Piro's strategy of "adapting and intersecting Bhakti, Sikh, and Sufi inheritance to her own existential needs at one level, and sifting them for her philosophical contemplations on the other" (207) in order to mold an obviously premodern, personal narrative into a vehicle of self-expression allowing for the "multiple conditions of liminality that defined Piro's life—of occupation, gender, caste—combined with the sense of feeling persecuted" (226). Ambiguous religious identity as a factor motivating and shaping autobiographical narrative returns in the chapter on Raihana Tyabji—at least nominally a Muslim woman from "Bombay's Sulaimani Bohra community" (232), but also a spiritual seeker, a staunch supporter of Gandhi, and a humanitarian—and her book, *The Heart of a Gopi* (written in 1924, published in 1936). Siobhan Lambert-Hurley interprets the text as "recourse to Bhakti as a trope of liminal self" (232), which "mediated through a long tradition of Islamic life writings becomes as valid to those interested in self-representation as any other more identifiably autobiographical texts" (246). Both essays thus propose reading the mythical and the imaginary as autobiographical in the context of individual life stories and specific historical milieu, with Lambert-Hurley concluding, "A creative

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reading of this miraculous account then allows a woman's resistant voice to be recovered" (247).

In the final essay of the book, Kathryn Hansen recounts the lives and the life narratives of Jayshankar Sundari (1889–1975) and Fida Husain (189?–2001), both of them male actors who worked on stage as female impersonators in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Here, performativity is examined not only in the context of constructing the self, gender roles, and religious identities, but also in light of the multilayered modes of self-expression for those in performing professions, "The autobiographies present the reader with a medium to explore the subjectivity of the theatrical personality, alternately masked and unmasked in multiple guises" (260).

In the end, I would like to point out two recurring themes of the volume as of special importance in research on autobiography in the South Asian context. The first is the constant search for what might be called "autobiographical narratives-in-disguise," with its appropriation of various genres and texts of culture for self-expression, for instance, its use of the "mythical" as a convenient model for filing memories. The second is the careful mapping of silences and gaps in the autobiographical narratives in the specific context of women's self-expression. A quotation from the editors to sum up: "Women's voices and thus their self-representation may be convoluted, elusive, paradoxical, and metaphorical—or, to borrow a lovely word applied by Booth to Egyptian women's autobiographical writings 'diaphanous'—but they are still there" (12).

Speaking of the Self is a significant contribution to understanding the complexities of representing the self by women—or as women, as in the case of the actors Sundari and Husain—in South Asian cultures across regions and ages. It sensitizes the reader to the importance of the social, cultural, political, regional, and historical milieu in which the autobiographical narratives are played out. Moreover, it shows the diversity of forms employed in the self-representation of South Asian women, both within and outside the classical genre of autobiography, paying particular attention to how rewriting the canon can deepen our understanding of self-expression practices in South Asia as well as other cultures that were earlier denied the very existence of an autobiographical discourse.

NOTE

1. For more information on Women's Autobiography in Islamic Society, see http://www.waiis.org.

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Monika Browarczyk

Nima Naghibi. *Women Write Iran: Nostalgia and Human Rights from the Diaspora*. Minnesota UP, 2016. 224 pp. ISBN 978-0816683840, $28.00.

Over the last several decades, the examination of Iranian women's writing, produced inside and outside of Iran, has been the subject of detailed and scholarly analyses in a number of books in English as well as in numerous essays.[1] The diversity of global and theoretical approaches has produced varied opinions on the way these texts can be examined and read, each shedding light on a different angle of this complex body of work we call "Iranian women's writing." Among these, there have been studies on Iranian women's autobiographical narratives, a very popular genre that has peaked in the last two decades. This scholarship examines the popularity of this genre among Iranian—and other Middle Eastern women—and highlights the reasons why life writing as a form offers an accessible framework for the expression of trauma, pain, and healing for writers and a space for witnessing for readers.[2]

Within the scholarship about Iranian women's writing, Nima Naghibi's *Women Write Iran: Nostalgia and Human Rights from the Diaspora*, for the first time, brings together a book-length study of Iranian women's autobiographical narratives and issues of human rights, trauma, and memory. *Women Write Iran* picks up where some major studies about Iranian women's writing have left off.[3] Although the study oscillates between the events of the 1979 revolution and the 2009 presidential elections as points of departure for the popularity of Iranian women's autobiographical narratives both among readers and writers, the text starts with Neda Agha Soltan's death and the social media revolution that surrounded the 2009 presidential elections in Iran. The first

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chapter, "Claiming Neda," opens with the 2009 elections and a thorough examination of Neda's death as well as the viral spread of her video across social media platforms. Naghibi examines how brief social media posts contribute to interest in new kinds of narratives and autobiographical accounts about post-2009 life in Iran based on a sense of global empathy. She begins by highlighting how one individual's "story resonated effectively and affectively with a large number of people across the world" (17). An analysis of Neda and her story as a poster child situates one of the main arguments of the book, which is concerned with "how emotions circulate within and between texts" and "why some are more popular (or affecting) than others" (10), leading to new questions about and innovative approaches to reading these autobiographical narratives.

While studies of Iranian (and other Middle Eastern) women's autobiographical accounts have touched on the circulation of emotion and the reasons for the popularity of these narratives, they have usually done so by situating the narratives in very specific sociopolitical and historical contexts. For example, in *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit*, Gillian Whitlock examines the sudden popularity of Middle Eastern (including Iranian) women's autobiographical narratives in relation to the events of 9/11. In my own work, I discuss the social and political waves that led to the surge in Iranian women's narratives, identifying the Iranian revolution of 1979, the events of 9/11, and the 2009 elections as watershed moments that inspired both the narrators to tell their stories and the readers to pick up these books. While in these studies there is some explanation for the emotional reasons why writers choose to engage autobiographically in particular moments in time, and why readers pick up these narratives, these approaches sometimes sum up and situate the production and popularity of Iranian women's memoirs in relation to very specific political and social moments and acts. Consequently, some of the memoirs and their writers have been accused of having political agendas. As Naghibi observes, "diasporic Iranian memoirists have thus had to contend both with a suspicion of the genre in which they write and of their political motivation" (8). There is usually an overt politicization and skepticism about this body of work in the criticism that surrounds it, to the point of reducing the narratives to political acts, overlooking human elements and connections. For example, in their treatment of and approach to Azar Nafisi's best-selling memoir, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, some scholars and critics completely overlook the emotional engagement of the text and author, and reduce the book to a purely deliberate political act and statement in the wake of 9/11.

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Naghibi, however, raises a different issue in her study, asking us to look at the matter from an alternative perspective. She asks us to read these narratives beyond what we perceive as their political agenda. As she tells us:

> While the anti-imperialist critique is certainly valid, there is more to be said about these memoirs, and about their popularity in the West, than that they are complicit with a neocolonial and imperial system of knowledge production about the East, and the lives of Eastern women in particular. This study suggests that understanding diasporic Iranian women's memoirs . . . opens up possibilities of reading these texts beyond their perceived political agenda. (6)

Although the book examines the responses of writers and readers in the context of two political and historical moments in Iranian history, it does so in relation to the emotional engagement and not so much the political one. "This study of diasporic Iranian women's memoirs . . . offers an alternative framework," Naghibi writes, "from within which these narratives can be read: that of revolutionary trauma and nostalgic longing" (7). Using trauma (of the revolution, of 2009, and of narratives of imprisonment and exile) and nostalgia (of return to a homeland, of individual and intergenerational memory, and of a collective idealized homeland with which the diaspora identifies through Neda's story), Naghibi sets out to examine the popularity of these memoirs in relation to the emotional and human responses of the writers and readers that make these narratives affective. Her aim has been to examine the global human connections and responses created through these texts. The crux of her study lies in identifying how "by drawing on the empathy of the reader-spectator-witness, life narratives offer the possibility of extending to the subjects a recognition of their humanity" (7). She tells us she explores "the political and social possibilities of affect," or namely how a book touches or emotionally affects the reader (10). A new dimension to her study is that she asks a set of questions, as to why some texts, despite being written in the same framework and time period as the popular ones, have failed to capture the readers' empathy or to affect them, and have not gained the attention they deserve. Naghibi examines this concept, stating that "the question of whose story receives more attention and attracts more sympathy and whose traumatic experience gets witnessed, can be addressed with an attention to the politics of visibility" (160). Through a detailed analysis of two books—Afsaneh Moqadam's 2010 *Death to the Dictator: A Young Man Casts a Vote in Iran's 2009 Elections and Pays a Devastating Price* and Amir Soltani and Khalil's 2011 webcomic *Zahra's Paradise*—she comes to the conclusion that several factors are at play in the lack of circulation and success of some of these narratives, namely that "the lack of affective impact in the popular context raises the question of the

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authentic truth of the narrative" (158). Some of these books fail to impact their readers because there are elements that make it difficult for the readers to feel a sense of human empathy with the author/narrator/characters. She uses the comparison between the success of *Zahra's Paradise* and *Death to the Dictator* to demonstrate this difficulty by arguing that *Death to the Dictator* is more challenging for readerly connection because of "the pseudonymous status of the author; the anonymity of the narrative style of the third person, which tends to be above the action rather than in it; and even the uncertainty for the reader about the gender of the author" (158). She believes this distancing "causes us to question what we as readers demand affectively from victims of torture and oppression before we are willing to share empathy with them" (158). Naghibi concludes this thought by making a connection between how this lack of empathy interrelates with how readers understand a narrative's veracity. She states, "the lack of affective impact in the popular context raises the question of the authentic truth of the narrative" (158).

What further makes Naghibi's book unique is the range of autobiographical voices that she brings together under the rubric of diasporic Iranian women's autobiographical narratives. While the study of Iranian women's autobiographies in English has so far often been limited to memoirs and graphic narratives, this is the first study of its kind that brings in documentary film alongside prison memoirs, return narratives, and comics as types of autobiographical narrative. She dedicates an entire chapter, "Feeling Nostalgia, Feeling Guilt: Remembering Iran in Documentary Film," to an examination of how film has been a significant medium for Iranian women to explore and narrate their experiences. This emphasis on film as a form of autobiographical text opens up the field for both readers and critics to look at autobiographical accounts beyond the written word.

Although the study could have benefited by including an even more diverse range of texts, particularly more recent narratives post-2009, overall, Naghibi's book is a new starting point for the way scholars and readers could approach these texts from the angle of human connection and empathy. The study concludes with a thoughtful set of questions. Naghibi asks, "which narratives do we choose to engage with? Which narratives do we allow to affect us and which ones do we choose to ignore?" (169). This questioning leaves the reader with serious food for thought regarding how texts are selected. Most of us have a tendency, even out of curiosity, to choose and engage with texts that are more popular and have already gained a degree of visibility. While in some cases there is a true human connection with the narrator and their experience, sometimes, however, texts gain visibility at the cost of the reduction of the human connection and for purely political and social reasons as a reaction

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to an event. By offering a way to look at a diverse range of Iranian women's narratives in relation to their emotional reactions and engagement, the study puts more burden on researchers and scholars to situate these texts beyond the political and social context in which they are published and distributed as human narratives. This way of reading requires a recognition of the humanity in the other, rather than suspicion of their agenda, which can sometimes highlight differences and create distance. This approach emphasizes connections and the realization of our shared human narratives. In a world where we have many reasons to find our divisions, it is a fresh breath of air to think about actively reading texts from a humanitarian and empathetic point of view, and to be offered a possibility of reading beyond the expected.

NOTES

1. See Farzaneh Milani's *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* and *Words Not Swords*. The study of Iranian women's memoirs over the last decades has led to the production of numerous essays around this topic. For instance, see Bahramitash, Burwell, Dabashi, Darznik, Elahi, Motlagh, Mottahedeh, Nafisi, and Whitlock.
2. See, for example, Gillian Whitlock's seminal study specifically on Iranian and Middle Eastern women's writing in *Soft Weapons*.
3. For example, my own study, *The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity Since the Islamic Revolution*, ends with the influence of social media and the kinds of interactions that contributed to the emergence of new narratives from Iran after 2009, which is where Negar Mottahedeh's in-depth examination of the Iranian social media revolution ends in *#iranianelections: Hashtag Solidarity and the Transformation of Online Life*. These endpoints are where Naghibi's argument begins.

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Sanaz Fotouhi

Amy-Katerini Prodromou. *Navigating Loss in Women's Contemporary Memoir*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 166 pp. ISBN 978-1137482921, $90.00.

In *Navigating Loss in Women's Contemporary Memoir*, Amy-Katerini Prodromou critically analyzes first-person narratives that challenge traditional paradigms of loss and recovery. Theoretical and professional models, she convincingly argues, do not adequately capture the complex and multilayered experience of bereavement. Complementary, or even corrective, to the existing paradigms, the memoirs in Prodromou's study expand our understanding of loss and grief in fundamental ways. They show that recovery is ambiguous at best, loss is never fully recoverable, and adaptation, rather than acceptance, marks the experience of living in the aftermath of loss.

Grief memoirs, Prodromou points out, lend themselves to being explored for what they reveal about the lived experience of bereavement because they "are tied to the real" and conform to Philippe Lejeune's pact between reader and writer (34). She refers to the texts in her study as "memoirs of textured recovery" and suggests that they form a subgenre of the grief memoir that is especially illuminative of loss and recovery. Unlike other modern and contemporary narratives of loss, they present the experience of bereavement as

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ambiguous, shifting, and complex. Memoirs of textured recovery capture loss "in all its experiential textures" and offer "an alternative to more traditional compensatory paradigms" by blurring the presumably clear distinction between fiction and nonfiction, recalled and factual past, subjective and objective truth (41). All these ambiguities, never quite resolved by any of the texts Prodromou reads, signal nuances of grief that have not been sufficiently theorized.

As Prodromou aims to understand better the gendered aspect of bereavement, she focuses exclusively on women's memoirs "published roughly within the decade spanning the turn of the twenty-first century" (4). The earliest one is Lucy Grealy's *Autobiography of a Face*, published in 1994, and Hillary Mantel's *Giving Up the Ghost*, published in 2003, is the most recent. Like the narratives themselves, the thematic range of the texts Prodromou selects for her study broaden traditional understanding of loss and grief: Grealy's and Mantel's are illness memoirs; Mary Gordon's *The Shadow Man* and *Circling My Mother* are memoirs of parental loss; Inga Clendinnen's *Tiger Eye*, Kim Mahood's *Craft for a Dry Lake*, and Judith Barrington's *Lifesaving* are about the loss of childhood; and Jenny Diski's *Skating for Antarctica* engages all three thematic threads. The selection of texts effectively supports Prodromou's key arguments, while the formal organization of *Navigating Loss*—each chapter considers a different aspect of grief and offers a close reading of one or two primary texts that best illustrate its nuances—allows for a coherent presentation of the author's theory of textured recovery.

By portraying grief as a process that does not come to an end, memoirs of textured recovery challenge the model of grief that Sigmund Freud put forward in his influential 1917 essay, "Mourning and Melancholia." In the narratives Prodromou chooses, acceptance and closure are never achieved. The new wave theories of the 1990s, she argues, do not account for the full complexity of textured recovery either, even as they emphasize grief's open-endedness and complexity. A counterpoint to Freud's linear and finite model of mourning, new wave theories still leave out aspects of bereavement that memoirs of textured recovery show to be an integral part of experiencing loss. Not contained by either theoretical approach, the critical reading of memoirs of textured recovery calls for "more complicated theories of mourning which can accommodate an understanding of grief not in terms of Freud's absolute recovery nor Tennyson's 'loss forever new'" but instead in terms of "a space located somewhere in between" (4). To transcend the limitations of existing theories, Prodromou adopts "a kind of theoretical prism" that allows her new insight into grief and its literary representations (128). This multilayered

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approach "champions complexity" as it demonstrates the inherent ambiguity of loss and the evolving intricacy of grief itself (18).

In addition to resisting the narrative arc of loss and recovery, memoirs of textured recovery question the understanding that, in the aftermath of loss, the mourning self can be redefined and reconstituted in ways that successfully reestablish continuity with the past. By showing that it "is not easy to redefine the self in the face of fragmentation or outright negation of self," the narratives in Prodromou's study "complicate grief as a process of redefining the self" (131). At the same time as the chosen memoirs test one of the key tenets of new wave theories, they engage John Paul Eakin's theory of the continuous self and question the healing power of autobiographical writing. To tease out the nuances of textured recovery, Prodromou focuses on Mantel's *Giving Up the Ghost* and Clendinnen's *Tiger's Eye*, texts that resist the narrative arc of traditional illness memoirs. Instead, *Giving Up the Ghost*, *Tiger's Eye*, and other memoirs of textured recovery expose the curative limits of rebuilding a whole self through narrative, as they show the grieving self as irredeemably destabilized by loss. In doing so, Prodromou suggests, these texts invite new "theories of subjectivity that [would] allow for the performance of a shifting, fluid self even as it strives for wholeness and continuity" (60).

After demonstrating how memoirs of textured recovery expose the limitations of leading theories of grief, Prodromou calls attention to its key aspect—embodiment—which they do not account for at all. In the last chapter that centers on Jenny Diski's *Skating to Antarctica*, Prodromou puts forward an "embodied understanding of literary portrayals of grief" (88) as she argues that "the experience of loss is always a bodily experience; it is first and foremost about the body" (133). Prodromou calls for "privileging the body within the mourning process," a conceptual shift that would expand theoretical formulations of bereavement that exclusively consider its cognitive and emotional aspects (86). Memoirs of textured recovery touch on many kinds of embodied loss: the loss of the body of the loved one, the loss of a healthy body, and the loss of the innocent child body. Prodromou's reading of *Skating to Antarctica* shows that the embodied aspect of grief necessarily complicates the very notion of recovery. After all, the dead loved one will not return, the body ravaged by illness will always differ from the previously healthy one, and an adult mourning the loss of childhood innocence can never reinhabit it. As an embodied condition, grief can never come to a finite ending. It remains unresolved and only allows for "ambiguous recovery" in which loss is neither fully accepted nor assimilated (3).

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Unfortunately, Prodromou's very emphasis on complexity—of the grief process and the narratives themselves—means that, at times, it is a challenge to follow her own multilayered arguments. Prodromou offers a concise overview of leading grief theories and their shortcomings; the chapters exploring the redefinition of the mourning self and the embodied aspect of grief are also fairly straightforward. However, the section on truth telling in memoirs of loss lacks clarity and could be more explicitly tied to Prodromou's theory of textured recovery. Although the book sets out to redefine our understanding of grief—and does so successfully—Prodromou also challenges theories of autobiography, a critical task she does not sufficiently acknowledge as her interpretive goal. The book is as much about expanding the theoretical terms of life writing as it is as much about rethinking bereavement and loss, a critical engagement that is not signaled in the introduction at all. This omission means that some sections of the book appear to bear no overt relation to Prodromou's stated task of exposing the limits of existing models of grief.

In light of Prodromou's careful reading of the selected memoirs, it is surprising to notice her occasional tendency not to consult the original secondary sources, some of them of seminal importance in the field, from which she quotes. Even though she refers to contemporary critics whose work is easy to find, Prodromou excessively relies on indirect quotations. Rather than working directly from Susan Gubar's important 2006 study *Death's Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve*, she draws Gubar's quotation from an essay that only refers to it (25). Other examples of indirect quotations include passages from Leigh Gilmore's *The Limits of Autobiography* and Suzette Henke's *Shattered Subjects*, both influential in the field of trauma studies (26). A related oversight takes place when Prodromou correctly states that the 2001 edition of Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* made no mention of the grief memoir. She fails to note, however, that the 2010 edition does indeed feature an entire section on "The Narratives of Grief, Mourning, and Reparation," an addition that backs up Prodromou's own argument about the rising popularity of the genre.

The above shortcomings notwithstanding, *Navigating Loss in Women's Contemporary Memoir* effectively shows that grief, both gendered and embodied, is experienced across a wide range of emotions. As recovery and healing are incomplete at best, the grieving self is redefined—rather than recovered or renewed—through the process of mourning. Memoirs of textured recovery, read and illuminated through Prodromou's theoretical lens, do indeed

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capture "the subtleties and nuances of grief" (128). In doing so, they offer a newly complex understanding of loss and grief that has not been contained by earlier models of bereavement.

Marta Bladek

Daniel Worden, editor. *The Comics of Joe Sacco: Journalism in a Visual World*. UP of Mississippi, 2016. 272 pp. ISBN 978-1496802217, $60.00.

Published in the Critical Approaches to Comics Artists series recently established at the University Press of Mississippi, Daniel Worden's edited collection on graphic journalist Joe Sacco's critically acclaimed work makes a valuable contribution to several intersecting fields: comics studies, memory and trauma studies, and journalism, as well as visual and popular culture. This is a welcome first full-length collection of essays on Sacco's graphic reportage, which is examined here by both emerging and established scholars whose work is structured into four sections: "The Form of Comics Journalism," "Space and Maps," "The Politics and Aesthetics of Joe Sacco," and "Drawing History, Visualizing World Politics."

The productive dialogue created among the contributors is one of the most exciting features of the book, as it zeroes in on current debates that include the contribution that the medium of comics can make to the visual representation of disaster, violence, and trauma, particularly in cultures whose visibility is usually occluded in the mainstream media; the role of translation in the process of journalistic investigation; as well as the stance of objectivity in contemporary journalism. The authors are in conversation not only with contemporary comics scholars such as Hillary Chute and Jared Gardner (who contributes a chapter), but also poststructuralist theoreticians such as Judith Butler and Giorgio Agamben (whose work on the representation of violence and vulnerability is particularly valuable in this case), and scholars from fields as diverse as geography, translation studies, journalism, photography studies, thing theory, human rights studies, and ethical and political philosophy.

The first section, "The Form of Comics Journalism," begins with a strong contribution by Jared Gardner, who has written extensively on the medium of comics and who draws attention to Sacco's ability to expose "the fiction of synchronized time" that is usually shared by people outside of conflict zones (23). By differentiating between the representation of the politics of time in *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia, 1992–1995* and *Palestine*, Gardner throws into sharp relief the Eurocentric bias that surrounds "universal claims of networked time" (36). The other chapters from this section focus specifically on Sacco's interest in drawing attention to the mediated nature of

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journalistic investigation by placing the figure of the journalist (himself) on the page. Lan Dong looks at the blend of subjective truth and objective fact in *Safe Area Goražde*, while Isabel Macdonald reads Sacco's short story "The Underground War in Gaza" to point out Sacco's incorporation of figures and issues commonly neglected by "objective journalism" (56). Marc Singer picks up some of the same issues as Macdonald but with reference to *Palestine* and in order to critique Sacco's "defiance of journalistic objectivity" (68), as well as to point out Sacco's vacillation between voicing and silencing his own reading of the events he is reporting, according to those matters that trouble "his own sympathies" (74).

Considering Sacco's subject matter, cartographic representation forms an essential part of his work, and it deserves the more extensive investigation it receives in the second section, "Space and Maps." By working mostly on *Safe Area Goražde*, Edward C. Holland differentiates between mappings-in-text, which "underscore the processual and evolutionary nature of cartography" (87) and whose instability usefully allows the readers to position themselves in the event, and maps-in-text, whose purpose is to offer a basis for the understanding of Bosnia's position and historical background. Georgiana Banita and Richard Todd Stafford work on Sacco's collaboration with journalist Chris Hedges in *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*, a work that is part traditional text, part illustration, and part comics. While Banita focuses on the stillness generated by Sacco's drawings, showing that this stillness conveys the hopelessness and eventlessness of the future of sacrifice zones from the United States, Stafford examines Sacco's landscapes and portraits separately and shows that they work similarly toward revealing both the limitations of representation and our own limited access to certain disaster areas and the people affected by them.

Sacco's distance from conventional journalism is further explored in the third section, "The Politics and Aesthetics of Joe Sacco." Ann D'Orazio reads the presence of everyday objects such as tea, the keffiyeh, the hijab, tomatoes, and the olive tree in *Palestine*, in light of Bill Brown's thing theory and Jane Bennet's work from *Vibrant Matter* to illuminate Sacco's critique of conventional journalism's erasure of the nonhuman through the use of things on the same level as people, something that allows him to produce a more nuanced image of the people and places he investigates (155). Øyvind Vågnes's contribution also focuses on Sacco's inclusion of figures that are invisible or difficult to represent in mainstream media by reading his short story "The Unwanted" through Giorgio Agamben's concept of "bare life." Vågnes points out the particular challenge of showing the figure of the refugee not only because of the scarcity of video and photographic sources, but also because of the dangers

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that the very act of representation poses for the subject. Alexander Dunn reads Sacco's *Palestine* and *Safe Area Goražde* through Alain Badiou's *Ethics* to illuminate those elements from Sacco's work "that remain mired in an exoticism of difference and mask imperial power as humanitarian intervention" (168). Rebecca Scherr draws attention to the overwhelming presence of several "aspects of performance" that make Sacco's work particularly apt at representing trauma and human suffering (184). Scherr coins the phrase "comics of performance" (184) to refer to the superposed performative layers of Sacco's comics and to emphasize their potential of creating "highly constructed spectacles as a way to frame difficult questions regarding the politics of humanitarian witnessing" (185).

The book's fourth and last section, "Drawing History, Visualizing World Politics," broadens the conversation to include little-discussed aspects of Sacco's work, such as the role of translation in the process of documentation and the pedagogical uses of comics about disasters. In an interesting dialogue with Jared Gardner's article from the first section, Ben Owen approaches the representation of time in *Footnotes in Gaza* to point out Sacco's critique of progressive/linear time both because this understanding of time fails to provide an adequate description of Palestinian history and because it, in fact, contributes to an understanding of that history as a mere footnote (204). Brigid Maher and Maureen Shay both read the role of translation in Sacco's journalism, one of the few places that make the work of translators visible in the process of investigation. Kevin C. Dunn shares his experience of teaching an introductory course on international relations by assigning *Safe Area Goražde* as the first text in the bibliography. The students' negative reactions illuminate what is still one of the main preconceived ideas about comics: that they are primarily light humorous creations that run the risk of trivializing serious topics. However, the many positive reactions to Sacco's text also indicate a shift in general attitudes with regard to the potential of comics in the classroom.

The book is most exciting when contributors address the same topic from different and even opposing positions, but it also contains some repetitions—such as the fact that Joe Sacco deliberately makes his presence as an investigator known on the page—that are perhaps inevitable considering the fact that the book is a critical examination of a single author. From this perspective, it seems regrettable that the volume does not also include chapters dedicated to Sacco's musical journalism, comparisons to the work of other graphic journalists or writers who report autobiographically from disaster areas, or a more involved conversation on the dynamic between the autobiographical and the journalistic in Sacco's work. At the same time, even though the volume does produce some useful comparisons with other contributions from the broader

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field of visual journalism, it does not position Sacco firmly enough in the wider context of investigative journalism through more significant references to contemporary photojournalism or documentary film.

The Comics of Joe Sacco is an important editorial venture that can serve both as an introduction and an in-depth study of Sacco's work, and also as an important platform for some of the most heated current conversations on contemporary journalism and the medium of comics. Daniel Worden's edited collection has produced a well-structured series of in-depth close readings of Sacco's comics, with clearly articulated theses, expert and sometimes fresh critical approaches, as well as a coherent conversation among contributors.

NOTE

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Mihaela Precup

Robert Zacharias. *After Identity: Mennonite Writing in North America*. Penn State UP, 2015. 256 pp. ISBN 978-0271070384, $29.95.

After Identity, Robert Zacharias's edited collection of essays on Mennonite writing in North America, is a crucial and timely call for a shift in Mennonite literary criticism.[1] The book features twelve papers derived from a 2013 conference of the same name that convincingly argue in favor of turning away from the identity-focused critiques that seek to situate Mennonite literature in a cultural or religious context. Zacharias points out both in his introduction and, in more substantial detail, his earlier book, *Rewriting the Break Event*, that Mennonite literature, in Canada at least, emerged in an era that saw the marketability of cultural and ethnic difference (*Rewriting* 42–43). Thus, identity became a central focus as mainstream presses coaxed exoticizing stories of the "Mennonite experience" while critics predominantly viewed minoritized literature through the lens of race and ethnicity.

In his own essay in *After Identity*, titled "The Mennonite Thing," Zacharias observes that what was especially problematic about the focus on identity was precisely that any notion of an "essential, static, and authentic Mennonite identity" was by nature a reductive depiction that was inevitably "expressed through (but not reducible to) stereotypical markers of Mennonite culture, language and faith" (108). Mennonites and their culture were, consequently, reduced to "quilts, *Borscht*, head coverings, *Zwiebach*, and so on" (109). The

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negative effects of this kind of stereotyping are obvious, not in the least because "identity remains an issue for people in minority groups if for no other reason than because *they* keep making fun of *us*" (196, emphasis in original), as Magdalene Redekop points out in her essay, "'Is Menno in There?'" Critics only reinforce this stereotyping by focusing specifically on the ways in which Mennonite literature serves as an expression of Mennonite identity, yet this theoretical approach has been powerful and consequently hard for critics to shake. Admittedly, my own work on Mennonite life writing has fallen into this trap; however, identity politics have been so dominating that it has been difficult for critics to know precisely where else to take Mennonite literature.

I would suggest that *After Identity* provides critics with a helpful and much needed new perspective. Indeed, for anyone who wishes to analyze Mennonite literature, *After Identity* is now a crucial text because of how deftly and succinctly it puts to rest what has been the dominant and increasingly more reductive lens of viewing Mennonite literature since the inception of contemporary Mennonite literary criticism. Those who do not read this text risk falling into outdated traps of viewing Mennonite literature for its expression of an authentic Mennonite culture or identity. Instead, the book offers an array of alternate methods of investigating Mennonite-authored texts, such as Paul Tiessen's fascinating exploration of the publishing politics that went into the production of Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, the first major Mennonite novel written in English. Tiessen, examining the first edition's book jacket, points out that the influence of publisher Jack McClelland was so significant that it ultimately produced a heretofore unacknowledged hybrid text of "multiple ownership" (73). Similarly, in "Queering Mennonite Literature," Daniel Shank Cruz argues that focusing specifically "on a single aspect of a person's identity" works to foreclose other modes of identity such as gender, nation, class, and sexuality (143). Shank Cruz considers "hybrid queer-Mennonite identities" in order to, among other things, broaden the scope of queer discourse to incorporate narratives that emphasize the importance of the "moral journey" (144).

For scholars of auto/biography, *After Identity* does not, unfortunately, include an essay that strictly deals with Mennonite life writing. Spicher Kasdorf's article on "The Autoethnographic Announcement and the Story," however, examines texts that contain a "declaration of identity" that "always erupts as an instance of *apparent* nonfiction, even in fictional works" (25, emphasis in original). The article reveals that many Mennonite authors have been compelled to explain Mennonitism to their audiences—in effect, giving readers what appears to be the real scoop on Mennonites and their history. It is an announcement that "invariably get[s] it wrong . . . because it is impossible

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to pin down a complex and diverse people" (25). In this essay, Kasdorf inevitably confronts issues of life writing and explores several important autobiographical texts, such as Rhoda Janzen's *Mennonite in a Little Black Dress*. Yet Kasdorf's discussion is not limited to life writing, as she also considers autoethnographic announcements in Mennonite novels.[2]

Importantly, these essays do not suggest ignoring the fact that the authors are Mennonites or even the cultural factors at play. Along with Tiessen and Shank Cruz, other critics, such as Di Brant, call for examining a more hybrid Mennonite identity to counter the more dominant essentializing identity. Rather than rejecting the notion of identity wholesale, Shank Cruz interprets the title of the collection to mean "a desire to pursue, to go *after*" (144, emphasis in original). Indeed, while reading the book, I often took the title to mean chasing after new and diverse identities. In fact, Zacharias structures the book so that the essays in the first half (a section titled "Reframing Identity") call identity-based analysis into question while the essays in the second half ("Expanding Identity") "argue for a broader critical engagement with Mennonite literature beyond—but perhaps not entirely past—conventional identity-based concerns" (13).

These authors in the second half, then, do not fully reject unifying approaches to the literature. For example, Jesse Nathan's article in the second part, "Question, Answer," observes how "the form—[of] question [and] answer—appears across Mennonite poetry, wielded in very different ways" (176). Redekop, meanwhile, argues, "Far from being focused on the kind of identity that longs for a homeland . . . the implicit aesthetic that [she] sees at work in all of the major artists is . . . the affirmation of a 'play space' that has porous boundaries and is shared with artists from all ethnicities" (200). Considering the overall aim of the book, some readers may be suspicious of attempts like these to trace common topics and themes in a wide range of Mennonite literature. However, it must be noted that even these articles present Mennonite literature as heterogeneous and entwined with other literatures rather than unique and self-contained.

Some critics might justifiably take issue with the way that post-identity as a theory could potentially gloss over the very real necessity of some cultural groups to stress identity strategically on the political stage. If it is the case, as Renee Tiessen points out, that the "stimulating critical conversations about 'identity' and 'after identity' [are] occurring in fields such as Jewish American literature or Asian American literature," then it may be worth considering why such conversations may not be as prevalent in African American literature or Indigenous literature (210). Indeed, for those who are currently taking part in the very important Black Lives Matter protests or for those who

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are participating in struggles for Indigenous rights, such as the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, identity politics are still a necessary means of countering power, something that may become even more necessary for all minority groups (including women) in the Trump era.

Yet the book does not suggest closing the door on identity politics and concludes with Froese Tiessen's statement that "the challenge . . . is not to forget about identity altogether but to refuse it the front seat that it has occupied for so long in Mennonite literary discourse" (223). I do think that perhaps more could be said throughout the book about the potential drawbacks of moving beyond identity or the privileged position of being able to do so. However, this is recognizably not the point of the book. Just as it was necessary over twenty-five years ago to focus on Mennonite literature as a distinct field, it is equally necessary today to counter the stereotypical perception of Mennonites that solidified during the era of identity politics and to stress the new fertile ground that critics can explore. *After Identity* is a vital book that not only expresses the importance of finding alternative reading practices for Mennonite literature, but also presents various compelling and convincing ways to locate those reading practices.

NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: I want to thank Writing Back, the International Auto/Biography Association Life Writing Student and New Scholar Network (SNS) original interdisciplinary review series for supporting this review.

1. I want to acknowledge that Hildi Froese Tiessen, whose article appears in Zacharias's book, was on my dissertation committee. I was also colleagues with Robert Zacharias during his post-doctorate position at the University of Waterloo where I was completing my doctorate.
2. Kasdorf's article is an important one for life writing scholars, but for those interested in the specific intersection of post-identity theories and life writing, I suggest Ann Hostetler's earlier essay, "The Self in Mennonite Garb," as a way to engage with the ways that auto/biography can work to disrupt Mennonite cultural master narratives.

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Jesse Hutchison

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Alex Zwerdling. *The Rise of the Memoir*. Oxford UP, 2017. 238 pp. ISBN 978-0198755784, $90.00.

Over twenty-five years ago, I had the good fortune to spend a productive year at the National Humanities Center working on a book about family photos. Although the year was meant to be devoted to individual research and writing, the Center encouraged fellows to form seminars on areas of common interest. Some of us welcomed the chance to explore the attractions and the pitfalls of the personal academic writing with which scholars had begun to experiment, particularly in feminist circles. Nancy K. Miller's recently published *Getting Personal* commented, in part, on the personal writings of a number of colleagues at Duke who had joined in a formidable writing group experimenting with these new forms. We hoped and in part succeeded to be in conversation with Duke colleagues like Cathy Davidson, Alice Kaplan, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Jane Tompkins, but we also wanted, together, to determine the value of the personal in scholarly writing. And, indeed, our discussions were marked by strong passions and heated disagreements.

Reading Alex Zwerdling's rich discussions in *The Rise of the Memoir* was, for me, to be immersed in these urgent debates once more, though at a very different moment. Zwerdling begins *The Rise of the Memoir* with his recollection of that National Humanities Center seminar, stressing the discomfort some of us felt when challenged to account for our personal stakes in our projects. One of the organizers of our seminar, Zwerdling was a particularly skeptical reader of personal scholarship. What was gained by "getting personal"? I remember him asking. Is it not a distraction to focus on the scholar rather than the scholarship? What exactly do we need to know about the individual writing a book about family photographs, or about the genre of autobiography? And how much do we need to know: when are we saying too much when we situate our projects in the story of our lives, and when too little? Is personal writing self-indulgent, or worse, narcissistic?

In *The Rise of the Memoir*, Zwerdling comes back to some of these questions a decade later, as he traces the evolution of a genre that originates with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*. In Zwerdling's rigorous and illuminating discussions, the memoir is not so much the product of a writer's engagement with life writing as it is a long-range, sometimes lifelong, and mostly contingent and provisional "project." Memoir projects can stretch across numerous attempts and several books. The examples that Zwerdling reads in detail, ranging from Rousseau to Maxine Hong Kingston by way of Edmund Gosse, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Vladimir Nabokov, and Primo Levi, all share a number of characteristics that help define the memoir project. They each hover on the edge between the "I" and the "world," that is, between

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an assertion of individual uniqueness and a keen consciousness of the circumstances to which the individual is both subject and responsible. These memoirists worry and wonder about their responsibility to others—to family members whose lives they inevitably expose, to contemporaries whose fates they share, and to their community or nation. What authorizes the memoirist to speak for others?

The Rise of the Memoir traces these hesitations through all the texts it discusses by means of meticulous archival research into the papers of these writers. Through published and unpublished materials, Zwerdling shows that even as it responds to a compulsion to narrate the "I" in time, the memoir project tends, for most writers, to be halted by a cycle of hesitations, false starts, and difficulties, by reconsiderations and revisions, by shame and guilt. Life writing is a neverending process of self-questioning, and the "I" shifts and changes along the way in a series of experimental performances of self. As Zwerdling writes, "The compositional history of these memoirs seems almost as absorbing as the final products, because it allows us to understand just what was at stake for the writer whose story it is, who not only owns, but owns up to the words on the page" (5).

The book begins with a reading of Rousseau's memoir project as a "secular confession" that exposes the idiosyncratic singularity of the "I" to a sympathetic implied reader, engaging that reader in an identificatory bond. But over the course of the twentieth century, the time period that is the focus of this genealogy, that "I" emerges from this "radical solipsism" to be recreated as a broader "we" and "us." Zwerdling next discusses Edmund Gosse's family memoir *Father and Son* and the son's frustrated and painful effort both to appropriate the father's words that are indelibly contained within him and to liberate himself from that containment. Family legacy continues to preoccupy Zwerdling's reading of Virginia Woolf. When the memoir projects collected in *Moments of Being* and other memoir pieces were published decades after her suicide, Woolf's struggle to break free of a "constrictive" Stephens family tradition of memoir writing was revealed. The only way she could even attempt to break free was to experiment with different forms, mostly short fragmentary sketches. The fact that Woolf never intended to publish her memoirs enables Zwerdling fruitfully to raise the question of the memoir's audience: for whom is it written? For Woolf's fragments, the question remains open, but Woolf does, in Zwerdling's terms, "explore and anticipate shifts in how and to what ends the memoir form would be used," that is, "the decisive shift from private to public space, where the bewildered witness must learn to negotiate and survive in a borderless territory, no longer within the family but without it" (79).

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Zwerdling's multifaceted readings of George Orwell's "reticence and . . . need to bear witness" and Vladimir Nabokov's decades-long fraught composition of *Speak Memory* across the space of continents reveal two different sides of memoir—the attempted erasure of the subjective "I" in favor of the observer witness, on the one hand, and the self-involved, reflexive subject who, despite his reluctance, is forced to realize his entanglement in political history on the other. In these later chapters set in the second half of the twentieth century, the political comes to dominate as memoirists respond to Orwell's implied question in his "Why I Write."

Even as Nabokov fights against his representativeness, however, Primo Levi insists on it. In the chapter on Levi, *The Rise of the Memoir* comes together as a synthetic interpretive project. Here, perhaps, Zwerdling's own investment in the project can be detected. For Zwerdling, Levi is a memoirist with an unimpeachable responsibility to the collective. "How," Zwerdling asks, "can an autobiographical form so deeply rooted in a bedrock sense of individual identity be anything but an impediment to recording a group experience that begins with the stripping of every distinctive sign from the prisoner it is taking in?" (150). Where other memoirists need to liberate themselves from family, Holocaust victims are violently stripped of family and selfhood. And thus they acquire yet another responsibility, that of absolute truth. For Zwerdling, Levi's "recursive" memoir project, from *Survival in Auschwitz* to *The Reawakening*, *The Periodic Table*, and *The Drowned and the Saved* lives up to this challenge not least by embracing contradiction, by engaging in continual revision, and by refusing closure. And also, in Zwerdling's judgment, by concealing much of his private life from view.

The Rise of the Memoir ends with Maxine Hong Kingston's genre-bending autobiographical books. As a Chinese-American writer in the era of ethnic studies and identity politics, Kingston refuses to act as an interpreter of Asian Americanness. An immigrant daughter has to break the autobiographical pact to embrace myth, fable, legend, and even fiction to imagine and try to piece together her parents' and grandparents' lives in China. Paradoxically, she has to bear witness by means of invention and creation. Her cultural and linguistic remove shields her from the judgment of her parents who are unable to read the memoirs, and frees her to invent her narrator and to "imagin[e] the facts" (185). And yet, are not dreams, fears, and fantasies as much a part of our past lives as what we might call "facts"? For Zwerdling, this invention of new rules that reimagine the memoir is a healthy sign of the genre's capaciousness and its continuing vitality. He ends *The Rise of the Memoir* with a sense of anticipation of further developments in a genre he has lovingly, though not unambivalently, embraced.

Marianne Hirsch

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CONTRIBUTORS

Marta Bladek is an associate professor at the Lloyd Sealy Library of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the City University of New York. Her research interests include the interplay of place and memory in contemporary life narratives, Eastern European women's memoirs, and Russian American literature.

Monika Browarczyk is an associate professor of South Asian studies with a focus on Hindi literature at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland. She has been at Adam Mickiewicz University since 1999. She taught at Delhi University under the government cultural exchange program from 2005 to 2008 and was awarded a Fulbright senior research grant at the University of Texas, Austin, from 2012 to 2013. In cooperation with Maria Puri, she translated selected poems of Adam Zagajewski (Sahitya Akademi, 2011) and Andrzej Stasiuk's *Tales of Galicia* from Polish into Hindi (Rajkamal Prakashan, 2014). She edited and cotranslated from Hindi into Polish a volume of selected poems by Harivansh Rai Bacchan (Namas, 2013). She is currently conducting research on Hindi autobiographies by women.

Andrew Crislip is an associate professor and Blake Chair in the History of Christianity in the Department of History at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.

Meliz Ergin is an assistant professor of comparative literature at Koç University, Istanbul. Her research areas include modern Turkish and European literature, literature and philosophy, and ecocriticism. Her articles have been published in *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, *The Italianist*, *Forum Italicum: A Journal of Italian Studies*, *Europe and Its Others*, and *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. Her book, *The Ecopoetics of Entanglement in Contemporary Turkish and American Literatures*, is forthcoming from Palgrave Macmillan.

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Sam Ferguson completed a doctorate at the University of Oxford on "Diaries Real and Fictional in Twentieth-Century French Writing." He is currently a Junior Research Fellow at Oxford, specializing in diaries in French literature and the work of André Gide and Roland Barthes.

Sanaz Fotouhi is a writer, scholar, and filmmaker interested in diasporic writing and issues. Her book, *The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity Since the Islamic Revolution* (IB Tauris, 2015), is one of the first book-length studies of the body of Iranian writing in English. As a writer, Sanaz has published in Australian and international anthologies and journals. Her work appears in *The Guardian UK*, *The Jakarta Post*, as well as *The Griffith Review* and *Southerly*. The documentary she coproduced in Afghanistan, *Love Marriage in Kabul*, has been the recipient of numerous awards and shortlisted for the prestigious Australian Walkely Awards. Currently, Sanaz is the director of the literary network Asia Pacific Writers and Translators.

Marianne Hirsch is the William Peterfield Trent professor of comparative literature and gender studies at Columbia University. Hirsch's work combines feminist theory with memory studies, particularly the transmission of memories of violence across generations. Her recent books include *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (Columbia UP, 2012), *Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory*, coauthored with Leo Spitzer (U of California P, 2010), *Rites of Return: Diaspora, Poetics and the Politics of Memory*, coedited with Nancy K. Miller (Columbia UP, 2011). With Diana Taylor she coedited the Summer 2012 issue of *é-misferica* on "The Subject of Archives." She is currently at work on a coauthored book with Leo Spitzer titled *School Photos in Liquid Time: Archives of Possibility* and on a series of essays on the future of memory.

Jesse Hutchison is a PhD graduate from the University of Waterloo's English language and literature department. His dissertation, "Private People in Public Places: Contemporary Canadian Mennonite Life Writing," considers the various ways that Canadian Mennonite authors use autobiographical writing to highlight the significance of history, family, and community. His recent research considers the role of epigenetic memory in life writing.

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Laura E. Lyons is a professor of English and the Interim Dean of the College of Languages, Linguistics & Literature at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. With Cynthia Franklin, she coedited the 2004 special issue of *Biography* titled *Personal Effects: The Testimonial Uses of Life Writing*, and a number of articles on life writing and human rights. In 2010, she coedited with Purnima Bose *Cultural Politics and the Global Corporation* (Indiana UP) and the 2014 special issue of *Biography* titled *Corporate Personhood and Life Writing*.

Mihaela Precup is an associate professor in the American studies program at the University of Bucharest, Romania. Her main research interests include American graphic narratives, memory, trauma, and autobiography studies. Her most recent publication is "Bad Girls from Outer Space: Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples's *Saga* and the Graphic Representation of Subversive Femininity" (with Dragoş Manea) in *Bad Girls and Transgressive Women in Contemporary Television, Fiction, and Film* (edited by Julie A. Chappell and Mallory Young, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). She has coedited (with Rebecca Scherr) two special issues of *The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* on sexual violence in comics (Taylor and Francis, June 2017 and June 2018). She is currently working on a monograph tentatively titled "Picturing the Father: Memory, Representation, and Fatherhood in Autobiographical Comics" (under contract with Palgrave Macmillan).

Kathryn Sederberg is an assistant professor of German studies at Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Her research includes twentieth-century German culture and literature, autobiography and memoir, war and gender, and National Socialism and its legacies. She is currently working on a book project about the form of "rubble" in German literary and visual culture entitled *Rubble Work: German Literature, Visual Culture, and the Diary, 1943–1953*.

S. Shankar is a novelist and critic. He is the author, editor, or translator of eight books, the most recent of which is the novel *Ghost in the Tamarind* (U of Hawai'i P, 2017). His critical works relate to postcolonial literature, translation studies, and debates over World Literature, as seen in his two most recent critical essays, "Literatures of the World: An Inquiry" (*PMLA*, 2016) and "The Languages of Love: An Essay on Translation and Affect" (*Comparative Literature*, 2017). With Charu Gupta, he recently coedited a special issue of *Biography* titled *Caste and Life Narratives* (2017). He is a professor of English at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

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collection of six plays by award-winning playwright Catherine Filloux: *Eyes of the Heart*; *Kidnap Road*; *Lemkin's House*; *Myra*; *Selma '65*; and *Silence*. The plays have both national and international settings. Subjects include crimes in the history of human and civil rights; genocide; crimes against women; international human rights law; U.S. Civil Rights Movement; and Women's Suffrage.

REAL-LIFE FIGURES IN THE PLAYS

Ingrid Betancourt, Colombian politician and activist, kidnapped by FARC revolutionary forces in 2002

Myra Bradwell, first U.S. woman lawyer, instrumental in getting Mary Todd Lincoln released from an insane asylum in 1875

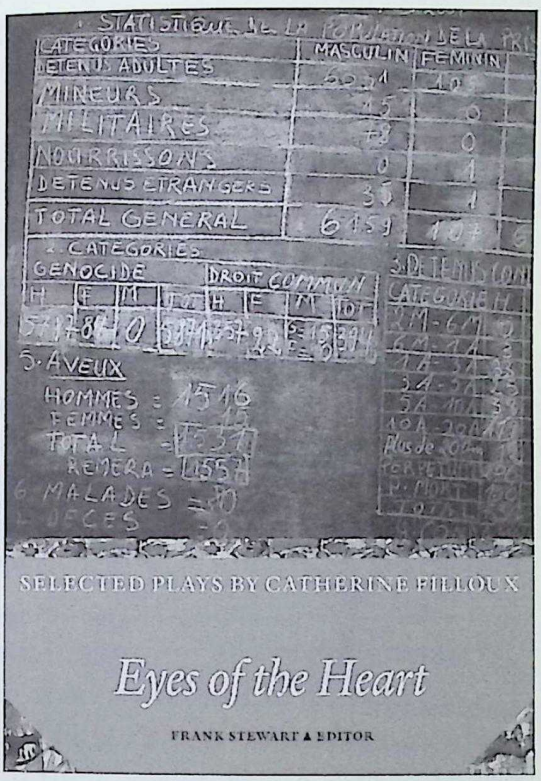
Raphael Lemkin, originator of the term "genocide," activist lawyer, and advisor on war crimes

Mary Todd Lincoln, widow of President Abraham Lincoln

Viola Liuzzo, Civil Rights activist murdered by the KKK in 1965

Pol Pot, head of the Khmer Rouge regime, responsible for the deaths of nearly two million Cambodians

William Proxmire, U.S. senator, advocate in Congress for the adoption of the International Convention for the Punishment of Genocide.



MĀNOA Vol. 29, Issue 1 (2017)

Catherine Filloux, author, is an award-winning playwright, winner of the 2017 Otto Rene Castillo Award for Political Theatre.

Frank Stewart, editor, is a professor of English at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and writer, translator, and editor of *Mānoa: A Pacific Journal of International Writing*.

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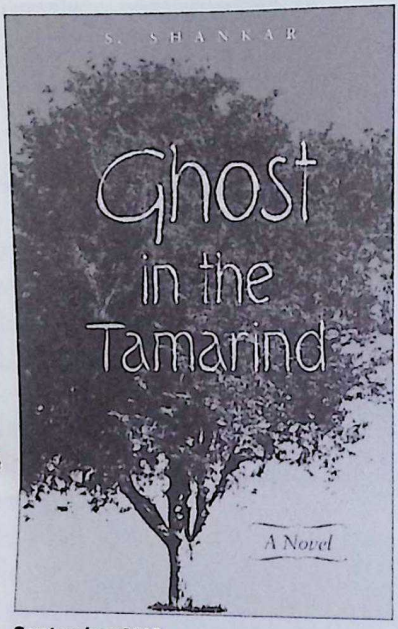
GHOST IN THE TAMARIND

A Novel

S. SHANKAR



September 2017
352 pages, 5.5 x 8.5 in
Hardback 9780824867218 **$68.00**
Paperback 9780824867225 **$24.99**

S. Shankar, a novelist, critic, and translator, teaches at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where he is a professor of English.

Who can you love? What do you owe to love and to the world at large?

Such are the questions that drive the story of Ramu, a Brahmin man, and Ponni, a woman of the "untouchable" caste. Set against the backdrop of twentieth-century South India, the novel takes readers from the 1890s village where Ramu's grandmother grew up to the Emergency years of 1970s Madras. Against this sweeping canvas unfolds the drama of Ramu and Ponni's forbidden love, inescapably intertwined with the great struggle against caste oppression. Caught up in the entanglements of love and politics, the couple risk everything to fight for a better society. Will they succeed?

Steeped in history, this memorable inter-caste love story shows ordinary people moved to uncommon courage in their desire to make a difference in a ruthless world.

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mediated and distorted by the machinery of publicity. In the context ongoing memoir boom, Zygutis's analysis of Stein's ambivalence about she garnered with *The Autobiography* speaks to the challenges today's graphers and memoirists face when their lives, along with their works, rn into the contemporary culture industry.

With its exploration of the connections among publishing, publicity, and celebrity, Zygutis's study of Stein on the lecture circuit nicely harmonizes with all three of the other articles in this issue. Like Zygutis, Andrew reflects on a famous author's attempt to manage her public persona. Reing Willa Cather's last years, Jewell reconstructs the psychological and cial context in which Cather issued a ban on the posthumous publicaher letters. Both Jayne Lewis and Anna Poletti draw upon book histoance the emergence of autobiography in Europe within the material and mic matrix of an evolving print culture, focusing on different historical k Lewis organizes her study around the enigmatic figure of Valentine kes, whose remarkably multilayered 1666 life narrative attempts to his credibility as a healer in the midst of a pamphlet war that put his tion at risk. Jean-Paul Sartre's 1964 autobiography *The Words* serves as s point of departure for a wide-ranging consideration—reaching back the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—of the powerful yet underciated role of the book as a physical object in undergirding our concepn an autobiographical text as "the record" of a life. We are pleased to be ing our readers such a mutually enriching quartet of essays.

I also want to use this occasion to point to some changes in *Biography*'s subions guidelines. For many years *Biography*'s occasional feature "Sketches Life" has made room for more personal essays by life writing scholars ing on practical, theoretical, and ethical issues related to their particujects. We are rechristening this feature "First Person" to underscore the that scholars are the "first persons" in their academic writing and that projects are always, in one way or another, chapters in their authors' ories. In most cases, the autobiographical aspects of research are necsubmerged in the final product, more or less invisible to the reader from sporadic appearances of the author's directorial "I," but sometimes ory of how an article or book came into being is as exciting and enlightas the ideas the text has to offer. It is with this conviction that we are ing our call for first-person memoirs of critical practice. Interested auhould query us about their plans before submitting manuscripts.

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In addition, because we know innovative work in life writing studies is going on outside the anglophone world, we are now inviting submissions of translations of influential article-length scholarship in the field of life writing. As with the "First Person" feature, we ask prospective contributors to send us a query describing the proposed translation project before they submit a translation.

John David Zuern

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WHY OBSCURE THE RECORD? THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF WILLA CATHER'S BAN ON LETTER PUBLICATION

ANDREW JEWELL

In September 1930, while she was staying at an old hotel in Aix-les-Bains, France, American author Willa Cather chanced to meet Caroline Franklin Grout. The elderly French woman first impressed Cather with her personal dignity, the way she was "contemptuously intolerant of the limitations of old age," and after they met and talked, she impressed her even more (Cather, "Chance" 5). Madame Grout happened to be the beloved niece of Gustave Flaubert, one of Cather's favorite writers. Moreover, Cather knew something of Madame Grout from a book she had treasured: Flaubert's *Lettres à sa Nièce Caroline*. Flaubert's letters to his niece—published in 1906, twenty-six years after his death—stirred such emotion in Cather that when she met, in the flesh, the Caroline of the book's title, she was struck dumb: "There was no word with which one could greet such a revelation," Cather recalls, "I took one of her lovely hands and kissed it, in homage to a great period, to the names that made her voice tremble" ("Chance" 16). As a reader, Cather relished this book of letters: "It will always be for me one of the most delightful of books" ("Chance" 35). Her satisfaction came, in large part, from the glimpse the letters offered into the personality of the writer; aspects of Flaubert were revealed to Cather through his companionship with another, a companionship accessible through the letters that manifest it.

Cather was so moved by a book of letters that, upon meeting the person to whom the letters were written, she could only express herself with a kiss. A little more than a decade later, as Cather was considering her own correspondence, she did what she could to prevent a book of *her* letters from coming into existence. In the seventh paragraph of her last will and testament she asked those who survived her to prevent the "dramatization" of her work and

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to prevent the "publication in any form whatsoever, of the whole, or any part of any letter or letters written by me in my lifetime." This will, executed April 29, 1943, when Cather was sixty-nine years old, deeply affected Cather's legacy. Her considerable body of fiction has remained in print and has been widely read, translated, and celebrated. But the voice of her correspondence has been obscured; the loving letters to dear nieces—Cather wrote them, too—were inaccessible. Biographers are always confronted with a limited set of facts and documents with which to write a life. The work of Cather's biographers has been further circumscribed because her letters, key pieces of evidence accessible to researchers, could not be directly quoted. The writer's sentences could only appear in her biographies blurred by paraphrase. Books of Cather's letters, which may have delighted readers enough to kiss the hands of her correspondents, were impossible for over sixty years after her death.

This essay considers the challenge to life writing that emerges from a recalcitrant subject, one that sought to manage her public representation even after her death. How do we approach a biographical subject who is unwilling to be scrutinized? How do we respond to the resistance in the record, to silenced voices, to stories of destroyed documents and obscured facts? I contend that the proper responses to each of these questions must emerge from the specific context of the biographical subject: Why is the subject unwilling? Why is the record obscured? Is there a reason to hide, a secret to conceal, or is the motivation something different and more complicated? And, if we can determine a reason for the opposition, does it matter? What are the ethical considerations when revealing an uncooperative subject?

To some degree, these questions will never be answered, as there are no stable answers to be found. Like Nancy K. Miller in her essay "The Ethics of Betrayal," one can wrestle with obligations to "Truth" and "Art," with the need to make sure "readers can be served," but the end of the passage is a question mark: "What is important for a given community, at a given historical moment, to know? If it is sometimes possible to justify violating the privacy of others by telling, whom can we trust to adjudicate these acts of exposure? How can we tell whether to trust the teller?" (151). Even so, in this piece I want to consider the resistance of one biographical subject, the author Willa Cather, in the hope that the specific details of her life, the particular psychological context of her decision to ban the publication of her letters, will begin to reveal a path toward answers. As detailed below, various explanations have been offered to account for Cather's decision to ban the publication of her letters, thereby limiting access to her non-public writings and her non-public representations of self. This essay is the first, however, to situate the explanation in the psychological moment of her decision; it is a biographical analysis used to interpret the unwillingness of a biographical subject.

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My own pursuit of this question emerged in a somewhat backward fashion. In 2013, with fellow editor Janis P. Stout, I produced *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, breaking (with the full support of the current executors of Cather's estate) the long-enforced ban on the publication of Cather's letters. In publishing such a volume, we risked contributing to the legends of those academics and editors who seek to distort the character of their subject, or at least control the biographical narrative, through the editing process. Consider, for example, the complicated history of Henry James's editors, executors, and biographers, as explored in Michael Anesko's *Monopolizing the Master*. Those academics with distinctive access to a writer's unpublished letters (an apt description of Stout and myself) can be tempted to construct an idealized—or conventionalized—representation of that writer through the selection process. Particularly, academics with sole access, the sort Leon Edel had to James's materials in the mid-twentieth century, can feel possessive or entitled to control their materials: A. S. Byatt's 1990 Booker Prize–winning novel satirizing this phenomenon was titled, appropriately, *Possession*. Our work on *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather* was, I believe, motivated by something quite different than distortion or possession: we wanted to make the documentary evidence available to support broad and varied interpretive analysis. I'm certain that this goal is what motivates most editors of historical and literary materials. The machinations of James's executors and editors are an exception to the ethical rules that guide the editorial community. Like most editors, Stout and I wanted to open the documentary record to readers as transparently as possible, and our editorial choices—like never excerpting or altering an original letter and following the publication of a book with a free, digital edition of all of Cather's letters—support this motivation.

In the process of opening the record to Cather's readers, though, we had to consider Cather's ban on letter publication in her will. Our primary consideration was whether or not we thought Cather's preference in 1943 ought to outweigh the value of publishing the letters; clearly, we decided it should not. Cather's reason for the ban was a secondary consideration. Though we speculated some ideas about why Cather resisted publishing her letters, ideas we articulated in the introduction to the volume, there remained a mystery about the motivations of her decision. Since the publication of the book, I have been asked many times about Cather's will and her choice to prohibit letter publication, and I have continually disappointed myself with the answers I have been able to muster. But the questions—and my current work with Stout and others on the digital, scholarly edition *The Complete Letters of Willa Cather* for the *Willa Cather Archive*—have compelled me to look for better answers. This essay posits, I think, a better answer, one located in the specific circumstances of her decision and the mental climate of those years.

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CATHER'S BAN AND THE EFFECT ON BIOGRAPHICAL SCHOLARSHIP

In the decades since Cather's death in 1947, scholars who have been able to consult her letters have been very sensitive to what they have to offer and to the limitation Cather's ban imposed on their work. The biographers who tried to create a portrait of Cather with restricted access to her correspondence probably felt the limitation most keenly. In the earliest complete biography of her life—the 1953 volume *Willa Cather: A Critical Biography*, written largely by E. K. Brown but completed by Leon Edel after Brown's death—Edel notes in his "Editor's Foreword" that Cather's ban on the publication of her letters is "a loss to the corpus of her writings, for Miss Cather gave freely of herself in her correspondence, and her letters are touched with the cadence, as with the radiance, of her style; they reflect also, as letters can, the directness and generosity and charm of the personality, its courage and steadfastness" (xxiii). James Woodress, in his preface to his 1987 biography, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*, begins by pointing out the "traps, pitfalls, and barricades [Cather] placed in the biographer's path" (xiii). Sharon O'Brien, in her 1987 biography *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*, is even more pointed. She begins the introduction to her book, "Willa Cather did not make it easy for her biographers," and continues, "Cather set about destroying letters in her possession and urging friends to do the same. . . . She sought to control interpretations of her life and her fiction in the only way that seemed certain—by reducing or eliminating the evidence on which interpretation could be based" (3). And though these biographers did consult letters as they constructed their books, the specific language of the letters was, by legal necessity, obscured by summary and paraphrase; Cather's words were replaced with the biographer's explanation of her words. The cogency of Cather's personal articulation is not present in any sustained explanation of her life.

The seventh paragraph in Cather's 1943 will created a distance between her personal identity and her reading public. This gap was, one can safely assume, precisely what Cather wished to create. Though, as a reader, Cather valued books of correspondence—for example, in addition to her love of Flaubert's letters, she gave her friend Yehudi Menuhin a volume of Franz Schubert's letters in 1938 (*Selected Letters* 541)—she chose to obstruct the routine so common for literary figures of her caliber and prevented a collection of her personal correspondence from being published shortly after her death.[1] She left no surviving explanation for this decision. Her first executor, Edith Lewis—Cather's partner with whom she shared a home for nearly forty years and who upheld the ban on publication in her management of the estate—similarly did not explain *why* Cather wished to keep her letters from being published, if she, indeed, knew why. Banning the publication of

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personal papers implies, of course, that one wishes to keep personal things from mass circulation, and perhaps an explanation of the decision seemed unnecessary, seemed, even, to contradict the very motivation of the ban. In any case, no explanation by those in a position to explain was ever offered, and interested readers and scholars have been forced to draw their own conclusions. From this fog grew the story of Cather, fixated on keeping herself protected from the public, throwing her letters into an incinerator. It was a story that was easy to believe. It fit with the conclusions many drew when they learned of the ban: Cather must have been fiercely protective of her personal life, must have wanted to make sure no stranger could hear that intimate voice, must have had something to hide.[2]

In recent years, more and more letters written by Cather have emerged, new research has been done on them, the long-held ban on letter publication has ended, and *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather* has been published. The legend of systematic letter-burning is slowly evaporating as a myth born of bad information: despite a couple of isolated incidents of probable letter destruction by Cather and, after her death, by Lewis, there is no evidence of a comprehensive effort to collect and destroy all the letters. Many have referenced Cather's presumed systematic letter destruction, as when Woodress claims, "[Cather] and Edith Lewis destroyed as many of her letters as they could lay their hands on" (xiv), or when Lindemann notes the "few letters that survived the search-and-destroy missions of Cather's later years" (*Willa Cather* 5), but few if any provide citation or evidence for their claim. Instead, for decades, scholars have accepted it as a commonplace in Cather criticism, an oft-repeated but rarely examined piece of conventional wisdom.

The origin of the story is not clearly known, though it may emerge from Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant's 1953 memoir of Cather, which reported that after Jan Hambourg returned to Cather all the letters she had written across the decades to his wife Isabelle McClung Hambourg, she was "burning them up as quickly as she could" (275). Anecdotes have swelled into generalized statements about systematic "search-and-destroy missions," but such generalizations are unwarranted. Thousands of letters survive, and Cather's inner circle left evidence at her death that her letters were something to be protected and cherished. Her niece Virginia Cather Brockway writes in the days after Cather's death, "I will be very careful of everything of Aunt Willies—books, pictures, letters. M. [Margaret Cather Shannon] wanted me to take charge of all the letters but now I think they should be divided up—just in case of a fire or something unexpected" (Cather, *Selected Letters* 676). Though the apparent destruction of the McClung Hambourg letters and the absence of surviving letters between Cather and Lewis create a great "chasm" in the record

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(Lindemann, "'I Did'"), one cannot conclude that Cather wanted to destroy *all* of her letters. Thousands have survived, including a great many Cather or Lewis could likely have destroyed if they had wanted to.[3]

Those who have had the opportunity to read portions of Cather's correspondence have understood their value, as they are a distinctive part of her corpus of writings. They are the only surviving documents that might be considered "private" writings, in that they convey ideas and information not designed for a broad public audience. Yet each letter is a communication act between the writer and the specific reader or readers designed to receive the letter, and therefore each letter is a performance for an audience. Though letters are "private" in comparison to published novels and essays, they do not provide unfiltered access to the writer's private thoughts. Instead, they show the writer in relationship to another, in conversation. Each letter is, as Elizabeth Hewitt points out, "located at a communicative node—not only at a point of intersection between particular correspondents, but also within the larger system of correspondence into which these readers and writers have entered" (4). These conversations, fixed in communicative networks, are full of insights into the life and character of the writers. Cather's letters offer intimate reflections on her experiences, relationships, and contexts that are not found elsewhere in her work. When she is writing to a correspondent with whom she has an intellectual or emotional affinity, she gives of herself and reflects, in Edel's words, the "directness and generosity" of her personality (xxiii). The letters are performances, to be sure, but they are also often "authentic" self-representations; the writer, after all, discovers aspects of the self through the performance of writing.

We now know about and have access to far more of Cather's letters than any biographer has ever had in the past. When Woodress and O'Brien wrote their influential biographies in the 1980s, they had access to something around 1,500 known letters in various repositories. When Stout published her "biographically based critical study" of Cather in 2000, she was able to find around 1,800 letters. We now have over 3,000, and the "new" materials are of remarkable importance. Hundreds of detailed and open-hearted letters to family members—particularly her brother Roscoe Cather and his family—and to publisher Alfred A. Knopf are now available to scholars. Importantly, this new access to thousands of letters has provided clues to help us better understand the decision she made in 1943. This essay draws on the letters and other evidence to explain why Cather decided, in the final years of her life, to keep her personal letters away from the reading public. The letters reveal that Cather's last decade was fraught with grief, despair, and distrust. The decision

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for control and privacy in her later years corresponded with a depressed mental state. Her grief in response to personal loss, her frustration with a failing body, and her despair in a world at war created a mental climate that resisted public access. In these final years, Cather lived "while struggling against depression, concern about the state of world events, and a deepening proclivity toward withdrawal" (Stout 301). The period was a distinctively difficult one in Cather's life, one with more persistent mental and physical agitation than any other. Her "later years," O'Brien notes, were "marked strongly by illness and disability, periods during which she felt herself defective and marginal" ("Willa Cather in the Country of the Ill" 155). Her decision to ban the publication of her letters may well have been symptomatic of her mind in a time of psychological crisis.

Though scholarship has, over the years, noted the struggles of Cather's final decade—the final chapter of Stout's *Willa Cather: The Writer and Her World* is a particularly sensitive and thoughtful evaluation—this essay departs considerably from previous scholarship in a few key respects. Crucially, this essay draws on the actual texts of the letters themselves and is not limited to summary. This opening of access allows for a criticism that is more specifically drawn from Cather's language of self-expression and, therefore, can be more detailed in its analysis of Cather's frame of mind. Virtually all existing biographical criticism draws heavily on Cather's published work rather than the text of her letters because most of the letters, as texts, have heretofore been unavailable for close reading unless the scholar was able to undertake extensive travel to numerous repositories, and none of the available letters could be quoted directly.[4] This essay is also the first analysis to consider her final years as the atmosphere for her famous ban on letter publication. Though many have referenced the ban, none, to my knowledge, have contextualized the decision in a particular psychological period or have offered a detailed explanation for the decision. Instead, the ban (and the myth of letter destruction) is used as evidence for Cather's "obsession with privacy" (Lee 330) or to note that "as she grew older [she] became increasingly obsessed with privacy" (Woodress 141). But generalizations about Cather's privacy "obsession," particularly in light of her continued socializing and letter-writing in her late years, does not adequately explain her choice to obstruct publication of her letters. What was happening within her that led to this sweeping and influential decision? To understand more fully the psychological climate that led to the ban on publication of the letters, it is important to reconsider the story of Cather's final decade and the specific shape of her grief.

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CATHER'S TROUBLED FINAL DECADE

In 1937, ten years before she died, Cather was working actively. Houghton Mifflin was preparing to publish the Autograph Edition of her works, and she was reading proof and attending to details on those volumes. More important, she was beginning to write a new novel. This book had a basis in some early memories, but it would need to be researched carefully. In October 1937, after months of at least intermittent work on the manuscript, Cather wrote her sister Elsie and told her that she believed the new book would "be pleasant company" during the winter, but that she needed to consult a book that was still in her parents' old house in Red Cloud, Nebraska (Letter to Elsie Cather).[5] It was her father's rebound copy of *The History of the Valley of Virginia* by Samuel Kercheval. She was writing the book that would become *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, a novel of antebellum Virginia that drew on family lore and the community the Cathers left behind when they migrated to Nebraska in 1882. In early November, she told her friend Zoë Akins that she was "working on a new book which is such a pleasure to me," though the Autograph Edition was taking so much of her time that "God and man seem agreed that I shan't get ahead with it" (*Selected Letters* 538).

Later, in December 1937, her brother Douglass Cather came to New York for a visit. Though Cather regretted how busy she was with work matters when Douglass was in town, they managed to have some fun together. Together with Edith Lewis, they had a celebratory dinner on December 7 in honor of Cather's birthday. Douglass came to the offices of Cather's publisher, Alfred Knopf, and Alfred took a snapshot of him with his little Leica camera. They went to Carnegie Hall together to hear a concert by Cather's friend, violinist Yehudi Menuhin. Douglass also consulted with a heart specialist in New York, and Cather told her sister Elsie that, according to the specialist, Douglass's heart was "absolutely all right" (*Selected Letters* 539; 554).

But in early June of 1938, Douglass died suddenly of a heart attack at age fifty-eight. Shortly after hearing the news, Cather wrote her sister expressing the shock she felt at his death: "Nothing in my life has ever hit me so hard. Father's death and Mother's seemed natural. They had lived out their lives, but this seems unnatural altogether, and I cannot get used to it or feel reconciled to it" (*Selected Letters* 548). She did not go to California for the services, but in New York, at the hour of the funeral, Cather went into the nearby Church of the Dominican Fathers and quietly honored her brother. She told her sister that she could not find an Episcopalian church that was open in the evening, but that the Catholics understood "that in this world grief goes on all night as well as all day" (*Selected Letters* 549).

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Cather was floored with grief in the months after Douglass died. In September, she confessed to another brother, Roscoe, that all summer she could not sleep without medication, that her hair fell out in big chunks, and that her hands were shaking. But she was able to find some comfort with Lewis at their cottage on Grand Manan Island, and reported, "My hands are steady again, I sleep fairly well, but I am not very happy" (*Selected Letters* 554). She was planning to sail that autumn to Italy to see her old and beloved friend Isabelle McClung Hambourg, who was ill with kidney disease at the Hotel Excelsior Semmella in Sorrento. Then, on October 10, Isabelle died. Cather told her friend and editor Ferris Greenslet, with whom she corresponded about many aspects of her life even when she wasn't publishing with his company Houghton Mifflin, that Isabelle's death was "another great change in life for me" (*Selected Letters* 557). She wrote her old friend from childhood Irene Miner Weist that after the death of both Douglass and Isabelle, "I scarcely know how I shall go on" (*Selected Letters* 557). In a letter about the loss to Isabelle's sister Edith McClung in later October, Cather confessed, "You can understand that living will never be the same for me again. I don't yet know where I am or what kind of future there will be for me in a world in which there is no Isabelle to write to or to go to" (*Selected Letters* 560). A couple of weeks later, from the Shattuck Inn in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, Cather wrote to her brother Roscoe:

> You cannot imagine what [Isabelle's] death means to me. It came just four months after Douglass' death, before I had got my nerves steady again. No other living person cared as much about my work, through thirty-eight years, as she did. As for me, I have cared too much, about people and places—cared too hard. It made me, as a writer. But it will break me in the end. (*Selected Letters* 561)

The repeated claim in these letters to long-time friends and close family members is that the deaths created a fissure in Cather's life, a break in her very sense of self. These losses and their devastating effect on Cather are the beginning of the last, troubled stage of her rich life. Cather's claim that "living will never be the same for me again" was not an overstatement brought about by recent pain but recognition of an apparently very real shift in her sense of the world and her place in it. Her assertion that "car[ing] too much" will "break" her "in the end" is an acknowledgment that the deaths of her brother and longtime friend have unmoored her; she felt severed from the world she had been devoted to, one defined in part by the companions with whom she shared it. Though Isabelle lived far from her, "I often went to her," Cather wrote her niece, "and in mind we were never separated. Now we have no means of communication; that is all" (*Selected Letters* 562).

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Cather's personal grief was compounded by increasing physical instability and the war news from Europe. In the winter following the deaths of Douglass and Isabelle she suffered from a bout of influenza, and then, on March 16, 1939, she wrote to her acquaintance Dayton Kohler: "My Dear Mr. Kohler, What is the use? Hitler entered Prague last night. . . . However much we may try to live in a nobler past, this thing has come upon us and lowers our vitality and our wish to live" (*Selected Letters* 568). On May 20 of that year, she commented to Zoë Akins that "the wrongness of the world is a cloud over us all." Under this cloud, however, she did manage to complete her Virginia novel *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* in time for publication on her sixty-seventh birthday, December 7, 1940. And, for a time, the novel and its success brightened her life; she told Ferris Greenslet, "I wrote many chapters of Virginia ways and manners, just as things came back to me, for the relief of remembering them in a time of loss and personal sorrow. That 'eased' me, and comforted" (*Selected Letters* 593). But the novel also, in a way, precipitated a physical decline. In the autumn of 1940, she signed five hundred copies of the *de luxe* edition of the book for Knopf in three days, which sprained a tendon in her thumb. The pain grew worse and she was unable to write. In late December, partly in response to the frustration of her ailing hand, she spent a couple of weeks in the French Hospital of New York, a place that was as much a retreat for Cather as it was a place for medical attention. That provided some relief, but her hand continued to burden her in the winter of 1941 until Dr. Frank Ober, of Boston, was consulted. He designed a metal brace that kept Cather's writing hand immobilized and allowed it to heal. Cather wrote to her brother Roscoe in March 1941:

> I have not written you very seriously about [my injured hand] before, because I am afraid that I have a rather bad reputation in my family—a reputation for howling about my ills. But somebody in the family ought to know the facts. Of course when a hand gets in this shape, a painful arthritis sets in, and the question is whether I can ever use it again to write books or even letters. (*Selected Letters* 599)

Cather's hand was never completely stable again, and for the rest of her life she would cycle between times when she could write without significant pain and times when her hand again collapsed and she was forced to immobilize it in the metal brace. Though the discomfort of a hand in pain would be enough to deeply frustrate anyone, for Cather, the immobilization of her right hand hurt in another way. Out of a conviction that she could not dictate her fiction, she almost stopped writing. She wrote Carrie Sherwood on November 15, 1941, that dictating fiction "would be like playing solitaire with one's back to the card table—dictating the play. You have to see the thing before your eyes, a

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...on the sheet of paper like a picture," and so an injured hand meant that ...solace of work and creation was taken from her. She dealt with her grief, ...again, by losing herself in her writing. Now that comfort was threatened, ...scoring the frustration and disconnection clouding her experience.

Cather's hand was not her only physical burden. In the summer of 1942, ...had her gall bladder and appendix removed, a procedure that used to be ...much more invasive and complicated than it is now, and after the surgery she ...an extended period with no appetite and considerable weight loss. She ...didn't bring herself to eat the hospital food, and so Lewis lovingly brought ...cooked at their home over to the hospital every day in a taxi (Letter to ...Miner Weisz). But even after she recovered from surgery and returned ..., Lewis writes, Cather "never got back any true health" (*Willa Cather ...ing* 191).

Burdened by illness, Cather, who had always been a frequent and ambi... traveler, stayed closer to home. A vacation in California in 1941 with ...brother Roscoe and his family was her final trip west. She was also unable ...go to her cottage on Grand Manan Island in the Bay of Fundy during the ...s, so she stayed in New York or went with Lewis to retreats that were rela... easy to access, like the Asticou Inn in Northeast Harbor, Maine. She did ...rk intermittently on a new, longer work of fiction called *Hard Punishments*, ...d in 1944 and 1945, she wrote two stories, "Before Breakfast" and "The ...st Years." This last story, drawing on Cather's childhood memories and her ...tionship with her brothers, was completed in the late summer of 1945. ...But just as she was preparing to send it to her brother Roscoe, she got word ...that he had died in his sleep in California. She wrote his widow, Meta Schaper ...Cather, that it was a story that she had really wanted to share with him: "It ...is about our childhood. I can't bear to look at it now" (*Selected Letters* 653).

The death of Roscoe was a terrible blow to Cather. Not only was he a ...brother and a man she deeply cared for, but he represented her last connec... to the earliest part of her life. She told her sister-in-law Meta that:

> several times in my life I [had] bitter losses, but never before have I felt heart-broken—felt that things were done for me. Roscoe was the only one of my family who felt about things as I did, and he was the only one who saw, from the begin...ning, what I was trying to do. He was my best critic, because he knew both ends of the process; knew the material, and what I had been able to do with it, or had failed in the handling. (*Selected Letters* 653)

Before receiving the news of Roscoe's death, Cather was beginning to write in earnest again, beginning to feel the old enthusiasm growing within her at her retreat in Maine. But after his death, she was finished. In the fall of 1945, she

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wrote Weisz: "I have been ill ever since I got home from Maine. I don't even try to do anything. I brought a new book home with me, but I have not had the energy to put it in order for Alfred Knopf to see, and I don't care whether it is ever published or not. Roscoe's death broke the last spring in me" (*Selected Letters* 657).

With the exception of letters, many of them long and full of rich remembrances, she does not seem to have written again after Roscoe's death. She told Meta Cather that she preferred, instead, to live very quietly: "It seems that if one has, for many years, cared a great deal for a great many people and great many things, one suffers a kind of emotional exhaustion in the end, and has to rest one's power to care" (*Selected Letters* 660). In April 1947, about eighteen months after the death of her brother, Cather died of a cerebral hemorrhage. The last letter Cather is known to have written, to her old friend Dorothy Canfield Fisher, begins with the news that her hand has been bothering her again, moves on to memories of their visit forty-five years before to the British poet A. E. Housman, and ends, in a handwritten postscript to a dictated, typewritten letter, "Curse my metal thumb!" (*Selected Letters* 673).

"THE TIME IS VERY DARK"

The grief and physical trauma that filled Cather's final decade affected her life tremendously and colored her decision-making in these final years. As O'Brien notes, "because she felt worthless when ill, she could easily descend into depression" ("Willa Cather in the Country of the Ill" 152). But a proclivity to depression does not explain what, specifically, motivated Cather to ban the publication of her letters. To understand that, we need to look in more detail at what evidence we have in letters to certain correspondents about the particular state of her mind. We need to trace the path her logic might have taken when she decided to put the ban in her will. There are a few suggestions in surviving correspondence that explicitly represent Cather's attitude about the publication of passages from her letters. For example, after acknowledging in a postscript to a January 1930 letter to Ferris Greenslet at Houghton Mifflin that she liked Oliver La Farge's *Laughing Boy*, a new novel the firm had just published, she was startled to see her name on an advertisement for the book. She immediately wrote Greenslet and reprimanded him: "Wasn't it faithless of you (and, incidently [*sic*], most illegal) to use my name, without my permission, in your ad. for Laughing Boy?" (*Selected Letters* 425). A few years later, when she was asked by University of Michigan English professor Carlton Wells if he might publish part of a letter she sent to him, she refused and responded tartly, "I take for granted that a person who writes a discriminating and intelligent letter is the sort of person who would not use

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any portion of my letter for publicity of any kind" (*Selected Letters* 511). She disliked the idea of people using her for their own advancement, of being a pawn in somebody else's game. "[S]ome of my old friends have used my letters in such insideous [*sic*] ways that I've grown cautious and suspicious," she wrote George Seibel in 1932 (Letter to George Seibel). She explicitly objected when she believed that her words from private letters were used for advertising value without her permission.

But she didn't object to every publication of her letters. In 1931, she gave Wilbur Cross permission to publish a letter she wrote to him about her 1931 novel *Shadows on the Rock* and told her publisher Alfred Knopf, probably in October of that year, "I don't remember the text of the letter at all, but I probably did not write anything very silly to Dr. Cross, whom I like and respect" (Letter to Alfred A. Knopf). It was published in the *Saturday Review of Literature* on October 17, 1931. Years later, in October 1940, she allowed some paragraphs from a letter concerning her 1925 novel *The Professor's House* to be published in the *News Letter of the College English Association*. There are a half-dozen other examples of letters Cather permitted to be published in her lifetime, some of them likely written with publication in mind.[6]

One might conclude, then, that though she acknowledged some letters might very well be seen as "public" texts, she established the wholesale ban on letter publication in 1943 in order to cautiously prevent what she especially detested: widespread transfer of private correspondence (the content of which she had largely forgotten) into the public realm. But to hold this as a personal policy while living is a different act than perpetuating the ban posthumously in a last will and testament. She was not just limiting personal exposure or controlling her public persona, she was preventing—or at least delaying—readers of the future from encountering the words of her correspondence. She knew that letters can have special significance for readers, can offer "sharp and unexpected flashes of . . . personality" that are distinctive from other published writings (Letter to Polly Damrosch Howard).[7] She even acknowledged that published letters allowed her to create one of her masterpieces, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. "Without these letters [from Father Joseph P. Machebeuf to his sister Philomene] in Father [William Joseph] Howlett's book to guide me," she writes, "I would certainly never have dared to write my book" ("On *Death*" 8). Yet, even with this appreciation for the value of letters, for the way the specific language of correspondence can reveal details and colors about a subject which other forms of writing cannot, Cather decided in 1943 to do what she could to keep these insights about *her* away from readers.

Cather's attempt to withhold her correspondence from audiences of the future is a decision that emerged from a time in her life when she was

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convinced that such an audience would be alien to her. As briefly referenced already, Cather's state of mind was not only influenced by the happenings in her private life, but also by the state of the world and, especially, the events of World War II. Her letters suggest that she believed something had dramatically altered in the world, that the values and culture that had shaped her were evaporating. Her perception of the world at large, a philosophical response to the events of the war aggravated by personal distress, led her to attempt to keep her personal life away from the generations of the future.

To illustrate this point, I want to consider a few key passages from letters Cather wrote during the war. These letters were written during the same time Cather codified her ban on the publication of letters in her will, and they are prime examples of the outrage and fear Cather often expressed in letters of this period. The first is from a February 12, 1944, letter to Viola Roseboro'. Cather had known Roseboro' for many years; the two women met through *McClure's Magazine* and had been corresponding since 1903. Roseboro', like Cather, was a well-traveled professional writer with roots in journalism. She was also a woman of Cather's generation who had come of age in the late nineteenth century. In the 1944 letter, Cather finds a kinship with Roseboro' in their shared curiosity about the world and love of travel. "I have been thinking of you in connection with the death of the world—the death of the world you loved so well, and roamed about in so much," Cather writes. "What a grand old sailor you were!—just drinking your fill of that beautiful old world which we thought would last forever." But her focus in this letter is not on reliving old memories, but on the fragility of the world the two both loved: "Why should the beautiful cities that were a thousand years a-making tumble down on our heads now, in our short lifetime? What is the sense of it?" She acknowledges that they—and the world—had already survived one cataclysmic war in the twentieth century, and she sensed that World War II was engendering destruction on a different scale: "We saw one war, and there was sorrow a-plenty. But why do we have to see our world destroyed? See countries sponged off the map, as we used to erase them from the blackboard—after we had drawn them at school?" Cather accounts for her despair philosophically, recalling a line she heard in a lecture by British physicist and mathematician James Jeans. "'Next to man's longing for personal immortality, he longs to feel that his world is immortal and will go on indefinitely as he has known it,'" Cather remembers Jeans remarking, and she continues, "This has been the feeling of human beings in all ages. Why on earth do we, in all the countless stretch of years, just in our little moment, have to witness everything laid waste?" Cather acknowledges the despairing tone of her letter but justifies it by telling Roseboro' that she is "one of the few people I knew who

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cared intensely and personally about" the cities of the world (*Selected Letters* 623). Savoring the pleasure she has known in travel and learning about the beautiful old world," Cather suggests in this letter that the world is not just at war, but has seen its "death." It is gone. The places and cultures she and her friends had treasured from their youth were now "sponged off the map." The beautiful cities" have been "laid waste."

This letter is partially about the physical destruction of places Cather had seen and loved, like England, Italy, and, especially, France. But it is also about the destruction of something else, something more fundamental to human experience. The "beautiful cities" are embodiments of a cultural legacy that Cather sees as threatened. She explains her sense of the threat's magnitude more pointedly in a letter to Norwegian novelist Sigrid Undset written around the same time as the letter above, the winter of 1943–44. Undset knew the horrors of the war more immediately and personally than Cather, as she fled Norway when the Nazis invaded in April 1940, and her oldest son died in action that same month. Undset was not a woman Cather had known for a long time, but she was an intellectual and artist whom Cather deeply respected and who knew the costs of the war. "This is such a terrible Christmas," Cather writes Undset, "it seems like a preparation for horrors unexampled and unguessed at. For the first time in my life I feel afraid—afraid of losing everything one cherished in the world and all the finest youth of the world." She goes on to identify, somewhat opaquely, the source of her fear: "The new evils we all know, but in their nature they destroy our power to combat them. The cold pride of science is the most devilish thing that has ever come into this world. It is the absolute enemy of happiness. The human mind, not the spirit, has disinherited human nature." The darkness Cather senses in the world feels not just like the suffering of people in a time of war, but like the very stuff of humanity—"human nature"—has been transformed, been "disinherited." She ends the letter, "This is a maudlin note to send out on Christmas day. Please forgive me. The time is very dark" (*Selected Letters* 623–24).

Though the language in the letter is vague and emotional rather than carefully analytical, it suggests that Cather perceives the presence of "new evils" that have created this transformation. The specific nature of the "new evils" Cather mentions are unclear—one only has to consider the unprecedented human and material devastation of World War II to get a general sense of her meaning—but her declaration that "in their nature they destroy our power to combat them" suggests she is not merely thinking of war machines. Rather, she is considering the power of terrible ideas and prejudices, of the way a nation like Germany, with a long history and remarkable cultural output, can be susceptible to the evil of Nazism. The "cold pride of science" likely refers

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to Cather's notion that scientists and engineers have pursued technology for technology's sake, that scientific and technological innovation has been uncritically valued in the twentieth century, and that much of what has been developed has, in fact, endangered the very existence of human beings on the earth. Only a few years before, in November 1939, at the outbreak of the war, she remarked to her friend Dorothy Canfield Fisher, "If only gasoline had continued to slumber in depths with prehistoric remains where it belongs, we'd be no worse off than human tribes and races have always been" (Letter to Dorothy Canfield Fisher). But, of course, gasoline was powering the war, and humans were facing unparalleled threats to their lives and communities. Cather is terrified of a world where humanity is overpowered by machinery, and she senses that the analytical processes of technological innovation have created a posthuman world, one where "human nature" as it has been known for millennia is "disinherited."

The philosopher Samuel Scheffler, in his book *Death and the Afterlife*, provides a keen insight into Cather's remarks and the depth of emotion they represent. Scheffler's major point in his book is that the actions, judgments, and decisions of our lives are inherently reliant on our belief that human life on earth will continue long after our own deaths. The "afterlife" of his title is not a spiritual afterlife of the soul, but rather the lives that go on after ours end in death, the lives of others that follow after ours are done. He points out that dependence on this kind of "afterlife" is fundamental to the shape and meaning of our lives. Our values, wrapped up in relationships and traditions and creations, depend upon believing humanity and its culture will persist beyond our lifetimes. Scheffler writes,

> So if by the afterlife we mean the continuation of human life on earth after our own deaths, then it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that, in some significant respects, the existence of the afterlife matters more to us than our own continued existence. . . . Without confidence in the existence of the afterlife, many of the things in our own lives that now matter to us would cease to do so or would come to matter less. (26)

He notes that when people make arguments about the importance of actions that will help human survival in the future, they often appeal to a sense of "moral obligation" and the notion that our descendants depend on it. Scheffler says in an interview about the ideas in his book, "it's not just that they're dependent on us. There's also a sense in which we depend on them. Without them, if there are no future generations, the value of what we're doing here and now is threatened" ("A Philosopher's 'Afterlife'").

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Scheffler's assertion about the present's dependence on the future—or, rather, a belief in the viability of the future—helps illuminate the profundity of Cather's despair during World War II. She lost her faith in the humanity that would survive her. I am not claiming that Cather had an apocalyptic vision of the end of humanity (though she did note in an otherwise brief business letter in August 1945 that "the atomic bomb has sent a shudder of horror (and fear) through all the world" [*Selected Letters* 652]), but that she felt a rift between herself and the future generations as she perceived them. Though she continued to take pleasure and interest in the lives of individual young people like her nieces and nephews, she felt alienated from what she understood to be a more general shift in human culture. Importantly, in the James Jeans quotation she shares with Roseboro', the focus is not on the world just surviving but on the world going on "indefinitely as [one] has known it." Cather's despair at the frailty of the world was enmeshed with her own sense that she no longer belonged in it. Her insistence on the world's decay was perhaps dependent upon her own notion that *her* life, *her* world, no longer made sense, that she could not survive in the world of the 1940s.

Indeed, her last decade is filled with evidence of retreat. Intellectually, she found solace in literature of an earlier era: Shakespeare, Chaucer, and, especially, the Scottish historical fiction of Walter Scott. According to Lewis, the Scott novels were particularly entrancing for Cather: "She talked of them, lived in them" (*Willa Cather Living* 195). The little fiction she wrote during her last decade, too, mostly concerned the past and may have signaled Cather's preference to escape the pain of the contemporary world through imagination. Her last published novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, is based on family history in antebellum Virginia, her short story "The Best Years" remembers the Nebraska of her youth, and her last unpublished and unfinished work, *Hard Punishments*, is set in medieval Avignon.

But signs of Cather's retreat, though plentiful, must be understood alongside the signs that she was paying close attention to her contemporary world. Lewis tells us she loved to read the old poets and novelists, but her letters also suggest she was reading contemporary literature, particularly literature about the war. She wrote Alfred Knopf in June and July of 1944 that she loved Joseph Kessel's novel *Army of Shadows* about the French resistance movement (letters to Alfred A. Knopf). She even agreed to provide the Knopfs with an advertising blurb for the novel, something she almost never did, though the notes she provided apparently came too late for the firm to use them. Her letters also contain many references to the war, often very specific references that indicate she was actively following the daily war news along with most of the rest of the world. For example, in a letter to Ferris Greenslet on June 10,

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1940, she notes that she is writing him on a "dreadful and discouraging" day, which is a reference to the news that Italy was abandoning its neutrality and declaring war on France and Great Britain (*Selected Letters* 584). In other letters, she sent along clippings of war news from the newspaper that held some particular interest, like when she sent Undset a clipping from the *Red Cloud Commercial Advertiser* that reports on a pilot from her hometown of Red Cloud, Nebraska, who shot down four Japanese planes on Christmas Day in 1941 (*Selected Letters* 609–10).

It is this combination of imaginatively retreating from the present while actively following its horrors that led Cather to conclude that the world she loved was disappearing and that the future would be unlikely to value the things that mattered to her. Indeed, Cather had indicated a loyalty to an older world in 1936, when she declared in a prefatory note that the essays in her book *Not Under Forty* were "for the backward, and by one of their number" (v). Some may counter that Cather's resistance to the present is similar to the mindset of many people who are aging, that her longing for the past is but part of the typical pattern that accompanies advancing years. But Cather wasn't just nostalgic for golden-years-gone-by in the early 1940s; she had developed a conviction that the world she loved was crumbling and that the destruction was chiefly caused by a fundamental shift in human character. Such a conviction was a distortion wrought by her grief and pain, but it was a conviction that undergirded the decision-making of her final years.

However, there is also levity in the written record she left from this period, a few signs that she understood her own sense of distance from the world with some awareness of its evasiveness and even foolishness. One sign is the theme of her short story "Before Breakfast," written in the summer of 1944 but only published after Cather's death in the posthumous volume *The Old Beauty and Others*. This short story, not very well known, is the only late fiction of Cather's to have a relatively contemporary setting, and it directly confronts an aging person's sense of alienation from the world. Though other Cather works, like "Old Mrs. Harris" and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, also consider the challenges of aging, "Before Breakfast" is distinctive as the only surviving piece of fiction written in the 1940s that considers these issues directly. Its composition is nearly contemporaneous with many of the letters quoted above, so it provides striking evidence in the effort to understand Cather's viewpoint in this specific period.

Because most are unfamiliar with the story, it is helpful to briefly summarize it: Henry Grenfell, a successful businessman who began his working life as an underprivileged child, has come to his cabin on an island in the North Atlantic, an island undoubtedly modeled on Grand Manan Island in the Bay

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of Fundy, where Cather and Lewis owned a modest cabin. On the boat ride to the island, he has what he considers an unpleasant conversation with a geologist and his daughter and, after a sleepless night fraught with anger and disgust and memory, emerges from bed and begins his morning routine. Filled with unease and frustration, he soon leaves for a morning walk through the spruce woods to a treeless headland that looks out over the sea. While sitting on a rock, he sees the geologist's daughter preparing for a swim. He fears she is risking her life to swim in such cold water and starts to head down to rescue her but then observes that, before he gets very far at all, she successfully swims from shore to a rock and back again. After witnessing her private accomplishment, he walks back down to his cabin in an improved mood and ready for a hearty breakfast. There the story ends.

Like much of Cather's work, a plot summary does no justice to the real meaning and effect of this story. Central to the experience is Grenfell's psychology, and particularly his own sense of his relationship to the world. We learn that he is a married man with three sons, that his family is the epitome of success and sophistication, but that he feels distant from them and believes they are as "cold as ice" (400). He flees Boston, his work, and his family with regularity—not even telling them where he is going or for how long—to his retreat on the island. He also struggles with "dyspepsia" and feels ashamed that he is physically "delicate" and must eat a special diet. His response to this shame is to spend months of each year proving his manhood with rough physical recreation, like big game hunting. According to Henry Grenfell, one must kill a polar bear as recompense for having a stomach that can only tolerate graham crackers and milk.

The bad night that precedes the action of the story is inspired by Grenfell's conversation with the geologist on the boat. Responding to Grenfell's polite questions, the geologist provides considerable scientific information about the island and reports that it was 136 million years old. This information infuriates Grenfell. It is a "childish bitterness" toward "'millions' and professors," Cather tells us, inspired by "several things" (397). More specifically, Grenfell resents having his romantic notions of the island disrupted by scientific knowledge. It isn't that the professor's report provides information that contradicts Grenfell's conclusions; it is that Grenfell does not want geologic time burdening his conception of the world: "Why tear a man loose from his little rock and shoot him out into the eternities?" Grenfell thinks. "All that stuff was inhuman. A man had his little hour, with heat and cold and a time-sense suited to his endurance. If you took that away from him you left him pointless, accidental, unrelated to anything" (399).

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Grenfell has constructed a sense of his own value that is vulnerable when subjected to the realities of the natural world. Science destroys his conception of self, as it contradicts his notion that his limited perspective, his humanity, is meaningful in relation to larger patterns and longer histories. Significantly, Grenfell's own articulation of his angry vulnerability comes in the form of private declarations to the planet Venus in the sky at daybreak. Anthropomorphizing the distant planet, he bursts out, "And what's a hundred and thirty-six million years to you, Madam? . . . You were doing your stunt up there long before there was anything down here but—God knows what! Let's leave that to the professors, Madam, you and me!" (397). And later, his mind turns to Venus again: "there was that planet, serene, terrible and splendid, looking in at him . . . immortal beauty . . . yes, but only when somebody *saw* it, he fiercely answered back!" (403).

Grenfell's reaction, which Cather labels in the story as "childish," is a veiled effort by Cather to meditate upon—and poke fun at—her own psychological fixations of the period; the story is, as Stout remarks, "an act of reflection on herself as a person" (309). Grenfell is not exactly an avatar for Cather, but his pompous, foolish response to geological information and the modern world is, I think, Cather's private self-satire. Grenfell's focus on Venus, even, is an echo of her own private life and thoughts. In a 1936 letter to Lewis—the only known surviving full letter to her—Cather writes about witnessing Jupiter and Venus in the sky above Gap Mountain in New Hampshire and, as she does in the story, speaks of Venus as "she." "I can't but believe that all that majesty and all that beauty, those fated and unfailing appearances and exits," she writes Lewis, "are something more than mathematics and horrible temperatures. If they are <u>not</u>, then we are the only wonderful things—because we can wonder" (*Selected Letters* 520). Her private comment to Lewis in 1936 admitting to a longing for anthropocentric meaning behind the physics of the universe, and respecting the human habit to invent such meanings, is echoed by Grenfell in his insistence that human seeing was needed to make Venus beautiful in the sky. Grenfell, then, is an exaggerated mouthpiece for some of Cather's own thoughts.

Grenfell is an autobiographical character only in the sense that Cather empathizes with his anxieties; his life story is very different than hers, but she understands where he's coming from. In creating the character, she drew on her own need to retreat and the distance she felt from the world. Like him, she longed for a human scale when understanding the complexities of life and the universe. But, tellingly, Grenfell, isolated on his island, is also a little ridiculous, and Cather knows it. He's hurting, and his pain is real, but he is irrational and crabby, too. Cather must have seen a little of this quality in herself

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...well. She knew, at some level, that her fear of the death of the world was ...ggerated and emerged not solely from rationality but also from her own ...ersonal grief and frailty. And the ending of "Before Breakfast" underscores ...ather's awareness: Grenfell, upon witnessing the geologist's daughter swim ...to the sea, feels, at least temporarily, a gentler relationship with the world. ...e watches her, but she doesn't know she is being observed. He sees that she ...s not fully anticipated how cold the morning would be, and yet, solely for ...erself, because she does not know she is being observed, she accomplishes ...e task anyway: she takes off her robe, jumps into the cold water, swims to ...e rock, and swims back to shore. In this simple action, Grenfell sees cour...ge and determination, and it gives him hope. "Plucky youth is more bracing ...an enduring age," he thinks (407). His last thought in the story, before he ...es his breakfast, is in evolutionary time: "when that first amphibious frog...ound found his water-hole dried up behind him, and jumped out to hop along ...e could find another—well, he started on a long hop" (407). Grenfell, ...ho has felt himself part of the past and dying world, begins to envision a ...orld that will outlive him. In the pluck of the geologist's daughter, he real...es that humans will continue, that they have the tenacity for the "long hop" ...t will take to make it through a trying time, and that the values of his life will ...ot completely fade with his passing.

This ending must be a glimpse into Cather's own muted hopefulness in the summer of 1944. "Even at the advanced age of seventy-plus," Stout writes, "she regarded attentively a humanity that had come a long way, hopped a long hop" (312). It was a time that corresponded to more hopeful war news, too: the summer of 1944 saw the liberation of Rome, the Allied landing at Normandy, and the beginning of the liberation of France. Perhaps this news mitigated Cather's conviction that the world she loved was on the cusp of extinction and she could again believe that happier, more peaceful days lay ahead. But that moderately improved outlook darkened again with Roscoe Cather's death and the dropping of the atomic bombs in 1945, and Cather never revised the decision she made in 1943 to keep her letters from being published. Her will was not altered.

A close look at Cather's final decade and the psychological context of her will suggests that Cather's decision to ban the publication of her letters was not a result of an abstract belief in privacy or a dismissal of the value of books of correspondence. She was not trying to hide any secrets. It seems far more likely that Cather banned the publication of her letters because she believed that the world as she knew it, people as she understood them, would not long survive her death. The humanity left on earth would somehow be "disinherited"

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from what came before, and there would be no "afterlife" for people of her kind. She felt that the future, whatever it might be, would have no place for her, and that, therefore, the future could not and should not be entrusted with her personal correspondence, especially those hundreds of letters written to family and friends that revealed her relatively unguarded self.

One brief section of the will, however, suggests that Cather left the door to the future open a crack. After the strongly worded direction to her "Executor and Trustee" not to allow the publication of her letters, a clause admits that the rights may one day vest "in my legatees or distributees," people of the future not directly named as executors in the will. She states that she hopes these future generations will also prohibit the publication of the letters, but that it is not her intention to "charge" those who own the rights in the future with legal enforcement of the ban. Instead, she leaves it to the "sole and uncontrolled discretion of my Executors and Trustee" to decide whether or not to enforce the restriction she has requested. Observing this part of the will, Norman Holmes Pearson commented that she understood "The future must make its own decisions. All Miss Cather could do was to make the future as remote as possible" (8).

Perhaps Cather made the future remote in her will because it *was* remote to her, unknown and untrusted. We are, of course, that future she feared. I am, as the author of this essay and the editor of her letters, even more specifically the thing she dreaded in 1943: a person who would help expose her personal writings to the public. I'll admit, though, I don't feel even the slightest bit guilty about it. Partly this is because the Cather I know and study is not just the Willa Cather of 1943, but a Willa Cather who is unstuck in time. For me, she is at once the vivacious youth anticipating her life, the young woman driving forward with fierce desire, the mature person generating fiction of incredible artistic quality, and the woman deeply engaged with the world and the people she loves. She is the woman who is so moved by a writer's book or letters that she can only express herself with a kiss. The despairing older woman, though a very real Cather, is only one Cather among many, and *that* Cather's voice, as I hear it, is overwhelmed by the vital voices that came before.

I realize that in pointing toward Cather's grief and depression in these years I risk accusations of a self-justifying argument: as an editor of her letters it may seem I need to find a way to dismiss her preference not to publish her correspondence. I don't think self-justification is my motivation, however, if only because I've never felt any hesitance about our justification for publishing her letters. It has always felt like the right thing to do. In 1962, the poet John Neihardt traveled to Red Cloud, Nebraska, to dedicate the new Willa Cather Museum, and at the dedication he commented,

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> It is usual, I believe, to regard such ceremonies as being concerned with honor paid to the dead, and yet those whom we call the dead can need nothing that we who linger here a little while can give . . . it is for us, the living, and for the living who shall follow us, generation after generation, that we set this Willa Cather Memorial against the flowing years, lest we forget the precious heritage that is ours through her. (1)

Likewise, we published Cather's letters for living readers, those who (like us) are enriched by them and by the lives and relationships they witness. The dead, including Willa Cather herself, need nothing from us.

NOTES

1. We have ample evidence of this trend among authors who were arguably Cather's peers in the early twentieth century: Sarah Orne Jewett died in 1909, and *The Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett* was published by Houghton Mifflin two years later; Sinclair Lewis died in 1951, and *From Main Street to Stockholm: Letters of Sinclair Lewis, 1919–1930* was published by Harcourt, Brace, and Co. in 1952; Ellen Glasgow died in 1945, and Harcourt, Brace, and Co. published her *Letters* in 1958; H. L. Mencken died in 1958, and Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., published his *Letters* in 1961; F. Scott Fitzgerald died in 1940, and Scribner's published *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald* in 1963; and *Selected Letters of Robert Frost* was published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston in 1964, only one year after the poet's death.

2. One interpretation is that Cather destroyed or restricted access to her letters to hide evidence of her lesbian identity. For example, the apparent destruction of letters to Isabelle McClung Hambourg, reported in Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant's *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (275), has been assumed to be the elimination of "evidence" of Cather's "romantic attachment" to McClung Hambourg (O'Brien, *Emerging Voice* 128). The connection between Cather's letters, their partial destruction, and her sexual identity is a highly complex issue. However, I resist the notion that letters were destroyed *because* Cather wanted to hide her love of women. First, the surviving letters include a few that are explicit declarations of love and physical attraction to a woman (her college letters to Louise Pound) and many that demonstrate profound intimacy with both Edith Lewis and Isabelle McClung Hambourg (in her frequent mentions of both women in letters to family and friends). Second, the only other batch of letters that is known to have been destroyed, those Edith Lewis got rid of shortly after Cather's death, were quite clearly of a different nature. According to the summaries Lewis privately made as she destroyed them, they were polite letters Cather wrote as a young woman to an older hometown acquaintance who had moved away (Lewis, Notebook). Though it seems unlikely Cather suppressed her correspondence just to hide her lesbianism, it certainly may have played a role. See Lindemann, "'I Did Feel Queer,'" for more on this issue.

See Jewell and Stout's introduction to *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather* for more discussion of the myth of Cather and Lewis's destruction of letters.

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4. Many biographies—like those written by Brown, Lee, and Woodress—devote the bulk of their final chapter of Cather's story to a reading of her last works of fiction and include little or no analysis of her letters from the period.

5. In this essay, I cite many letters, only some of which are published in *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*. For all letters that do appear in that book, I have included a parenthetical citation with page numbers. For those that do not, I have provided date and addressee information in the text so readers can identify the appropriate letter in the Works Cited list or, when necessary, have included a parenthetical citation. The four-digit WCA identifiers at the end of the individual letter citations in the Works Cited list correspond to the *Willa Cather Archive* identifiers developed for *A Calendar of the Letters of Willa Cather: An Expanded, Digital Edition* (Jewell and Stout, *A Calendar*) and used in the forthcoming *Complete Letters of Willa Cather* edition (Jewell and Stout, *The Complete Letters*).

6. For further examples of Cather's "public" letters, see Bohlke.

7. Cather made her comment to Polly Damrosch Howard in response to Howard's request for copies of any letters her husband, playwright Sidney Coe Howard, might have written to Cather, as she was putting together a collection of his correspondence. Cather responded that she had no letters, but that she understood the value of such an endeavor.

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"STRANGE IMAGINATION"
VALENTINE GREATRAKES'S HEALING AURA AND THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL IMPULSE

JAYNE LEWIS

About four years since I had an Impulse, or a strange perswasion in my own mind (of which I am not able to give any rational account to another) which did very frequently suggest to me that there was bestowed on me the gift of curing the Kings-Evil: which, for the extraordinariness of it, I thought fit to conceal for some time, but at length I communicated this to my Wife, and told her, That I did verily believe, that God had given me the blessing of curing the Kings-Evil; for whether I were in private or publick, sleeping or waking, still I had the same Impulse; but her reply was to me, That she conceived this was a strange imagination.

–Valentine Greatrakes, *A Brief Account of Mr Valentine Greatrak's and Divers of the Strange Cures by Him Lately Performed* (1666, 22)

Just as we shook hands, I felt my right arm shoot back over my shoulder and reach off behind me into the distance and touch Greatrakes's hand. Strange in the extreme, yes. At that moment, I thought it was strange and I still think it's strange today. But there it was. . . . If one wonders how I knew it was Greatrakes, I don't know. I just knew.

—Leonard Pitt, *A Small Moment of Great Illumination* (2006, 184–85)

Seventeenth-century English life writing is notoriously strange. Exemplified in the Oxford antiquarian John Aubrey's "tumultar[y]" and improvisational *Brief Lives* (1680–81), its dreamlike discontinuities and formal instability respond to a highly experimental phase in the history of popular print. Meanwhile, unresolved contests of voice and rhetorical motive register upheavals in

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the structure of political authority that were bound up with ongoing crises of spiritual and social life. A rationalized template for life writing is widely considered to have emerged only at the end of the century, as signaled by the first printed appearance of the word "biography" in 1683. Like its belated avatar "autobiography," that word posits the stability of the graphic medium (*graphé*) in which the shape of an individual life (*bios*) was confirmed in both the first and third persons.[1]

But students of earlier seventeenth-century life writing also chart familiar slippages between such persons, between visual and verbal media, and among available genres of personal identity. Such irregularities seem to anticipate what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson present as today's "new imaginings of virtual sociality enabled by concepts of community that do not depend on personal encounter," birthing novel "archives of the self in time, in space, and in relation" (169, 190). As then-new and relatively abstracted print "archives" accommodated older styles of performative embodiment, (late) early modern life writing often seems to limn postmodern "somatography." G. Thomas Couser proposes that this way of representing an embodied subject's typically non-normative experience is mobilized by new media platforms that sometimes circumvent *graphé* altogether. Finding somatography's epitome in the popular subgenre of the disability memoir, Couser also finds that in postmodernity the ambivalent trope of "healing" works to integrate increasingly abstracted media forms with anomalous human bodies. Such integration grows urgent in unstable political contexts that renew fundamental questions about the integrity of any given life (Couser 3).[2]

Published in London in the middle of the so-called Year of Wonders, 1666, the idiosyncratic memoir of an actual healer, the so-called Irish Stroker Valentine Greatrakes (1628–1682), practically personifies the strange familiarity of seventeenth-century life writing. As its title promises, *A Brief Account of Mr Valentine Greatrak's and Divers of the Strange Cures by Him Lately Performed* transforms its author's bodily performance of "strange cures" into an ordered literary "account" that is necessarily removed from such performance in place and time. As the first of my epigraphs suggests, Greatrakes's memoir presents itself as "strange" to contemporary eyes as well. Defying "rational account," it sends mixed messages about the person at its center while presenting unpredictable "Imagination" as a technique of communication and self-knowledge, and ultimately as a mode of realizing human singularity. Greatrakes himself has recently attracted sustained attention as a biographical subject whose incoherence reflects his turbulent times (Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist* 11–49). But a literary analysis of the text that presents him as an *auto*biographical subject, albeit avant la lettre, offers new insight into his

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...g's potentialities as a work of transpersonal and ultimately transhistori-
...imagination.
...In Greatrakes's case, I find that work to have been supported—not thwart-
...by his memoir's inconsistencies. Some of those inconsistencies are sim-
...embedded in the 96-page book's hybrid narrative form. *A Brief Account*
...cast as a letter to "the Honourable Robert Boyle"; though Greatrakes speaks
...in the first person, he thus necessarily employs the second as well, presenting
...himself to Boyle as "no stranger to your worth" while also speaking of him-
...self in the third person, as God's "poor Instrument . . . who has no farther design
...than the Honour of his Maker" (3). The book then endeavors to "invali-
...date [recent] Testimony" that this celebrated healer was a fraud; stylistically,
...attempts to direct quotations from that "Testimony" mean more oscillation
...between the third and first persons. A first-person chronology of life events
...begins only on page fourteen, moving briskly from Greatrakes's birth through
...the revelation and exercise of his "Divine Gift" of healing (34). By page 42,
...that narrative gives way to a series of epistolary "Testimonials" to the work-
...ings of the same "Gift," which refer to our protagonist in the third person.
...The last testimonial, however—dated only five days before *A Brief Account*'s
...May 10 licensing date—is another letter from Greatrakes to Boyle. A formal
...expression of gratitude to that eminent natural philosopher for his "many and
...great Civilities" (Greatrakes 95) returns Greatrakes's narrative to its point of
...origin.

By turns other-directed and self-assertive, Greatrakes's *Brief Account* swings between rhetorical convention and idiosyncratic personal details; the many voices that speak in its pages are dramatically uncoordinated even by the relatively undefined standards of the seventeenth century. But the memoir's most compelling discrepancies arise from another source: it also incorporates some aspects of literary representation that work against literature's status as a visual object in a consolidating material culture of print. As Roger Chartier has shown, seventeenth-century print protocols enfolded multiple modalities, both visual and verbal, within which authors might reach their readers (13–16). Many derived from still viable oral and manuscript—touch and voice-based—representational forms. Distributed along this medial cusp, Greatrakes's riddling self-representations yield unique ways of experiencing absent physical bodies as influential presences. As such, those representatives ask to be seen in light of the empirical sciences of his day. In fact, Greatrakes addressed his memoir to the "skeptical chymist" Robert Boyle who, alongside other representatives of natural philosophy's materialist turn such as Robert Hooke, grappled with the shadow that imagination casts upon mental and material representations of physical objects. This context also sheds light on *A*

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Brief Account's exclusion from modernity's rationalized canon of life writing a that canon forged itself around empirical and spatial matrices of accuracy and referential stability. Yet this very exclusion also predicts Greatrakes's return i the present time, and with it the surfacing of a long submerged aspect of the modern autobiographical subject.

SPECULAR TROPOLOGY

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), John Locke's philosophi cal "History of What Passes in a Man's Mind," provides a still unchallenged paradigm for the modern autobiographical subject. Locke grounded a "Man's Mind" in visual space and presented the charactered page as its analog, mak ing the *Essay* itself an example of the kind of self-reflection that his model of the embodied self allows. In Locke's wake, observes the moral philosopher Charles Taylor, modern selfhood presumes an "essential link between iden tity and . . . spatial orientation," just as "radical uncertainty about oneself coincides with "spatial disorientation" (28). With respect to post-Lockean life writing, personal identity's spatial orientation is necessary to both its know ability and its accurate representation in the graphic space of writing.

Paul John Eakin terms this necessity modern life writing's "referential pre requisite," and its spatial bias continues to underwrite his and others' more recent views of that writing as a diversified performance of bodily life ("The Referential" 131). For example, Smith and Watson reckon that "life narratives are multiply embodied" because "cultural discourses determine which aspects of bodies become meaningful—what parts of the body are 'there' for people to see. They determine when the body becomes visible, how it becomes visible, and what that visibility means" (50). It scarcely matters whether modern autobiography's first person appears through the sleight of hand that we call writing, as David Marshall supposes, or whether, as such critics as Felicity Nussbaum have found, it is produced in ambivalent transaction with external social, political, and representational conditions (Marshall 903–05; Nussbaum 3–10; see also Spacks 1–15). In either case, the modern autobiographical subject voices a body that remains spatially, and perforce visually, defined. The first person "I" is a convention for both marking the limits of that body and staging it as a unified object of perception.

The title page of Greatrakes's *Brief Account* of his own life faces the image of its author, captioned in script (Fig. 1). The printed pages that follow this "true and lively Pourtracture" anticipate the eidetic model of embodiment while reproducing the languages of testimony and witness that that model invites. And yet with respect to "Valentine Greatrakes Esq.," the portrait's handwritten caption stresses his "curing [of] several Diseases and distempers

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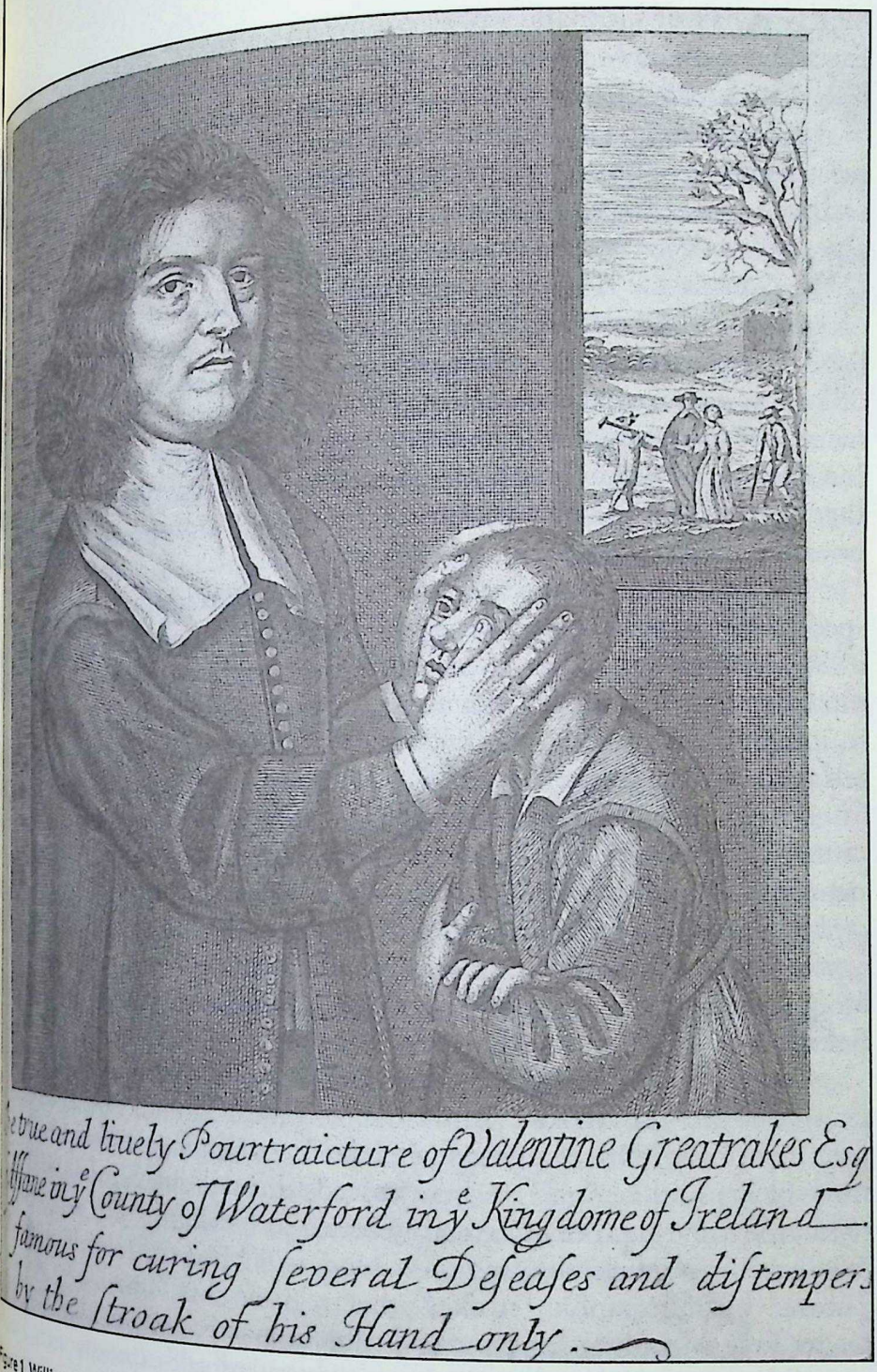

Figure 1. William Faithorne, Frontispiece to *A Brief Account of Mr Valentine Greatrak's and Divers of the Strange Cures by Him Lately Performed* (1666).

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by the stroak of his Hand only," ending in an inked sinuous wave that registers the movement of the engraver's own hand. The ensuing *Brief Account* likewise identifies its raison d'être as its narrator's singular "gift," or *charism*, of manual healing. Greatrakes—or "Greatrak's" as the typography sometimes recasts him—traces that gift to an invisible "Impulse" that "put a strange perswasion on my own mind" that his hands could, through protracted massage, or "stroking," literally move pain around and out of the bodies of others (22).[3] Greatrakes's *Account* consequently leaves two impressions. One is that of an otherwise undistinguished narrator whose "publick" (and now published) *charism* was once reserved for messiahs, apostles, and monarchs. The other impression that a reader may well form is that of the "private" movement, or "Impulse," which evidently kindled the idea that he did possess it. In Greatrakes's writing, the unseeable "Impulse" that "did frequently suggest" that he could remove pain by hand syncopates the outward expression of this power in the visual form of writing.[4]

The pressure to signal a significant "Impulse" transforms the formal visual space of Greatrakes's text, opening previsual communicative potentials within it. While Greatrakes does not concern him, Eakin too thinks of "impulse" as modern autobiography's referential *pre*-prerequisite. Charting the "specular reciprocity" that coordinates a life narrator's represented experience of himself with a living reader's experience of him as a subject, Eakin presents that interaction as "an antimimetic impulse at the heart of what is essentially a mimetic aesthetic" ("The Referential Aesthetic" 131). Eakin terms this transient intersubjective movement "tropism." The subtle ripple of "ingrained and rapidly shifting responses to external stimuli" literalizes James Olney's tropology of personal identity as a "vital impulse to order" that is realized in autobiographical space through the activity of metaphor (Olney 3; Eakin, "The Referential" 133).

Greatrakes's *Brief Account* alternates between these aspects of autobiographical "impulse" to solicit the same "strange imagination" that Greatrakes's wife "conceived" him to possess when he "communicated" the no less strange story of his healing "gift" to her. Indeed, throughout Greatrakes's *Brief Account*, the movement of imagination seems to speak for itself: "whether I were in private or publick, sleeping or waking, still I had the same Impulse" (22). Tutored by the graphic "strokes" that register this "Impulse," Greatrakes's reader may encounter him not as a subject, nor even as an object of experience. He appears instead as a movement toward self-expression. His kinetic presence can't be known to predate the specular forms of the words charged with communicating it. It sensibly arises from and through them.

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The result's undeniable strangeness virtually guarantees the absence of Greatrakes's memoir from standard accounts of modern English autobiography. *A Brief Account* goes unmentioned, for instance, in Paul Delany's still definitive study of the genre's birth out of the primordial soup of seventeenth-century "autobiographical writing." Delany highlights both that writing's discoherence and the inclination of its authors to picture themselves within a turbulent historical context and thus as both "an object and a subject of social process" (20). Yet for Delany these elements do not yield the impression of internal movement that Greatrakes's *Brief Account* does. Debora Shuger can see *hacceity*—the sense of a unique person's "individuating 'thisness'"—at play in seventeenth-century life writing, but identifies it with the existence of a strictly discursive classical ethos void of interiority (64).

Shuger does detect traces of the inwardly present self in private devotional writing, and it is of course with seventeenth-century Protestant spiritual autobiography that most genealogies of modern autobiography begin. Recent critics of spiritual autobiography eschew earlier assumptions as to its radical inwardness to embrace the sociable multiplicity of selves that appear in it. For example, Bruce Hindmarsh proposes that early evangelical conversion narratives often "qualifly] the notion of self-fashioning" (7), while Kathleen Lynch finds that the "disciplined interiority" cultivated in popular spiritual autobiography "underwrote a godly identity which was at once personal and social," an "intimate dance among selves" (3, 13). But even to this dance of social and inner selves, Greatrakes receives no invitation. The same was not so for his dissenting contemporaries John Bunyan and George Fox, whose documents of spiritual life have been read primarily in light of their evidentiary claims, their embedding of the "I" in particular circumstances that can testify empirically to what the Baptist Bunyan termed "the merciful working of God upon my soul" (6). Greatrakes's *Brief Account* passingly resembles both of these works: Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) was printed the same year. And in his journal, dictated in the 1670s and published two decades later, the Quaker Fox dwells on the epiphanic experience of an "infinite beam of light and love" and goes on to perform several faith healings for like-minded. He lays hands upon a Quaker girl suffering from scrofula and offers chiropractic treatment to a Friend who has broken his neck (Fox 19).

But Olney accurately perceives that in Fox's righteous narrative "the senses are all internalized," absorbed in the act of self-narration into "something altogether disembodied and pure" (Olney 167). By contrast, Valentine Greatrakes's erratic record of the "strange Cures by him . . . perform'd" actively displaces its own rhetorical pretenses and evidentiary claims so as to produce

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transient effects on other perceiving bodies, each unlike all the others. As it only thus becomes perceptible, the life narrators' dynamic experiences of their own bodies in and indeed as transition potentially transfers to their implied readers. In turn, the possibility of such transference aligns Greatrakes's memoir with the manual healing techniques that it references. These techniques not only justify his book's existence but encode its author's personal and potentially contagious sense of (well-)being.

THE IRISH STROKER

So then just who was Valentine Greatrakes? His memoir marks his birth on Saint Valentine's Day, 1628, to an Anglo-Irish family whose relatively modest estate adjoined the sumptuous Irish holdings of the Boyles. Greatrakes was educated among his mother's bookish people in England but returned to Ireland in time to witness "high and strange divisions throughout the Kingdom, *English* against *English* and *Irish* against *Irish*, and Protestants and Papists joyning hands in one Province against the Protestants of another: which differences to me seemed so unnatural, that I resolved not to intermeddle therein, till the mist of confusion was over" (17).[5] Greatrakes seems to have internalized these confusing "differences" as he plunged into melancholy so deep that it "brought my life even to the threshold of death" (17). Greatrakes seems not to have crossed that threshold. Instead, he joined Cromwell's Parliamentary army, serving as a lieutenant under Robert Boyle's younger brother, Richard. Under victorious Cromwell, Greatrakes was appointed justice of the peace in his native Waterford, a predominantly Catholic county. Here he was renowned for his evenness of hand, though he also took part in at least one witch trial, its time-honored centerpiece the insertion of pins into alleged zones of insensitivity in the fingers of the accused.

Greatrakes was not born a healer. That was the distinction of his Welsh wife Ruth Godolphin, a locally famed herbalist. It was at least two years after Charles II's restoration in 1660 that Greatrakes apparently experienced the "Impulse"—that "strange perswasion on my own mind"—that suggested he might be able to heal by touch. The first disease that he imagined he could cure was the "Kings-Evil," scrofula. This glandular disorder's political and credal significance has been heavily documented in light of its responsiveness to the ideologically fraught phenomenon of the so-called royal touch. As several historians have pointed out, Greatrakes's "strange perswasion" that he could banish scrofula with his own hands coincides with Charles's efforts to shore up a rickety monarchy's charismatic authority by reviving the royal touch that Puritan political ideology had discredited.[6] Charles himself supplemented touching with such material tokens as coins and cramp rings—

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more that can look either cynically modernist or perversely efficacious, given Silver's antibiotic properties. Insofar as it seems to mark the migration of the sovereign's special healing power into the body of an ordinary person—and in light of his republican sympathies—Greatrakes's claim that "God had given me the blessing of curing the Kings-Evil" may be read as a satiric rebuke to the "Evil" of "Kings" themselves. But as in the case of Charles's coins and cramp rings, a singular power once perceived to emanate from the king's charismatic body—and thought accessible only through tactile contact with that body—is distanced, objectified, and distributed among the many.

Apparently for the benefit of his skeptical wife, Greatrakes went on to display both his healing power and the "strange perswasion" that he possessed. The son of one of Boyle's tenants, one William Maher, had sought Ruth in hopes that she could cure the scrofula he suffered "very grievously in the Eyes, Cheek and Throat." Greatrakes, by his own account, "laid my hands on the places affected, and prayed to God for Jesus sake to heal him." Two days later, Greatrakes declared, "I saw the Eye was almost quite whole, and the Node, which was almost as big as a Pullets Egg, was suppurated, and the throat strangely amended, and to be brief (to Gods glory I speak it), within a month discharged it self quite and was perfectly healed, and so continues God be praised" (22–23).

God does not seem to have obliged Greatrakes to explain his success according to any specific orthodoxy, political or religious. Nonetheless, later commentators have focused almost exclusively on the political, rhetorical, and philosophical implications of the "amend[ents]" that Greatrakes apparently brought about. But what of this anecdote's emphasis on the perception of wholeness, its evocation of the fragile time sense ("within a month"; "and so continues") within which wholeness is preserved both in the "brief" writing of it and over a period of many days? Even as Greatrakes invokes the confirming image of sight ("I saw the Eye was almost quite whole"), these qualities of his writing suggest that the healer was interested primarily in communicating the temporal dimension of his "extraordinary" gift. As it does so—and again from within the language of passing time—*A Brief Account* registers the way in which he became sensible of himself: "I am very sensible of the particular time when this Gift was first bestowed on me," Greatrakes writes, "before which time I had it not" (34).

As word of his "Gift" spread through time and space, Greatrakes was forced to "make his house a Hospital" (3). Here, over a period of about three years, his hands dispatched several more cases of scrofula, even as his repertoire expanded to include epilepsy, migraine, rheumatism, and dropsy. In contrast to the instantaneous efficacy of the royal touch, Greatrakes's "stroking," was

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prolonged, dynamic, and highly unpredictable. As in the early case of William Maher, it could take days for a cure to take hold. Many never did so, or only "almost quite" did so; repeat visits were frequently in order. In the course of a stroking session, Greatrakes passed his hands over bodily surfaces, and sometimes simply over the clothes that covered those bodies. In this manner, his memoir suggests, he chased pain through the body until it visibly departed. Greatrakes's hands thus moved *invisibilia* through marked time into visibility. "I have seen *pains* strangely flye before him, till he hath chased them out at some of the extreme parts of the body," the influential high church bishop George Rust attested (61). Just how is it possible to "have seen" this flight? One may as well ask how it is possible to "see" the author of an autobiography. Yet Greatrakes's reader seems to do so, even as Eakin's generative tropism is rehearsed as interpersonal ritual. Sensed motion, however "brief" or fleeting, conspires with an act of making visible.

This subtle conspiracy informs *A Brief Account*'s many "Testimonials" to the "Cures . . . Perform'd." Bedeviled by sciatica, Robert Furnace was surprised to find his pain "driven downward from place to place without much grievance, until it came to his foot" (48). An "able Seaman . . . laboring with violent pains in his hip, ham, and ancle, contracted with carrying out and wading in water" likewise "had his pain removed by the said Mr Greatrak's stroking, first out of his hip, then down his thigh and leg, until he had driven it quite out of his toes" (51). John Doe (the man's real name) swore that "a headache lasting 3 or 4 years . . . was cured by the laying on of Mr. *Greatrak*'s hand." But here process (registered syntactically in the word "then") mattered as much as outcome. First, we read, the Stroker "demanded of me in what part of my head the pain lay." Then

> he laid his hand upon the place affected, and immediately I found the pain remove to another place of my head, which I also directed him to, who pursued it till it went out of my head; and so following it from place to place (laying his hands on that place of my body whither my pain did remove) till he drove it into my foot, where it was very painful to me, till at length he chased it out at my toe, I not putting off my stocking: Which he did at two several times, the pain (as I conceive) being divided; whereupon I forthwith found my self freed from all manner of pain both in head and body, and have so continued ever since (blessed be God) in perfect health. (55)

This very typical treatment protocol stands out for several reasons. First, it counters Elaine Scarry's classic anatomy of the modern body in pain, which radical isolation from language leads to the "unmaking" of the embodied subject's "world."[7] By contrast, by way of words that move through time, Greatrakes enlists his subject's own active sense of "direct[ion]" and ultimately be-

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of his power to "conceive." An intersubjective world is actively created in the fluctuating field of communication. So as to establish the mutuality of this field—one in which the text participates as it alternates his patients' first-person accounts with his own—the healer maintains only minimal and superficial contact with the body itself ("I not putting off my stocking").

Second, the healer pursues fugitive pain "from place to place" until it begins to seem objective, even visible. Greatrakes's healing practice thus both organizes sensation ("the pain being divided") and coordinates it with a mental image ("as I conceive"). Such spatiotemporal coordinations shape virtually all of the "Cures by Him Perform'd," securing the preconditions of their translation into verbal image.

Third, Greatrakes's healing technique distinguished him from those he touched as much as it identified his body with those in pain. It also divided him from himself in time. *A Brief Account* mentions that he had "myself for several years together been most violently troubled with the head-ach," and that "though I have put my hand a thousand times to my head and held it, it would neither remove nor run out the pains; but since God gave my hand this Gift, I have no sooner put it on my head where it was troubled but I have removed and run it out" (34–35). Here, Greatrakes becomes the visible object of his fingers' own ministrations; the first person ("I") contains within itself the third ("it"). Indeed, this duality reappears in third-person accounts of his therapeutic practice. In one popular anecdote, relayed by Rust, the Stroker awakened to find "one of his hands was struck dead," and stroked it back into "liveliness" with the other: "This was repeated two or three nights (or morning) together" (Rust 88).

Staged on the cusp between waking and sleep, Greatrakes's manual technique rendered the first and third persons interchangeable. Grammatically speaking, each activates the other. The resulting oscillation produces a kinetic experience matched to the eye's movement across the nonetheless static surface of the characters that communicate it. Hence the "liveliness" resulting from repetition "together" in Rust's account, the "thousand times" that turn into "no sooner" in Greatrakes's own, the "several times" resolving into "till at length" and "forthwith" that structures "Doe's" sentences. Significantly, while Valentine's movement at the hands of the healer binds to readerly apprehension of text through the rhetoric of ocular witness but rather through the transperceptual dynamic of mutual projection: "Upon the whole, the thing is wonderful, stupendous, and astonishing," concluded (or did not) the "Eye and Ear witness" Lionell Beacher in a short 1665 pamphlet diplomatically entitled *Wonders if Not Miracles*. "And makes us as men in a dream, when we think or speak of it" (4).

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It was by placing the "strange" phenomenon of Greatrakes's stroking technique in immediate (thus imperfectably knowable) time that contemporary readers were able to perceive the virtue that distinguished him from other men. *Wonders if Not Miracles* mulls over a range of possible sources for the virtue that distinguished Greatrakes from other men. These ranged from "occult Qualities, or symbolicall Sympathies; or some untrodden Method of Phylosophy, or application of Agents to Patients" to "the Providence of God" such that his healings might be seen "forerunners of those great things which [we] expect in the great Year of Expectations." Yet in the end, the pamphlet's publisher was resolved to "leave each to the the enjoyment of his own Opinion," for the source of Greatrakes's distinction was something "we must leave undetermined till time shall make it manifest" (5). The language of evidence, witness, and proof might be available here, but it is no more pertinent than that of evocative duration.[8]

Greatrakes took no money for his pains until 1665, and then only to keep his ever-foundering Irish estate afloat so he could travel to England. He went at the behest of Henry, Viscount Conway, whose philosophically inclined wife, Anne, a Quaker convert, suffered from debilitating headaches, their etiology to this day unknown. Having read of Greatrakes and with the hope that Irish stroking might relieve her pain, Conway invited him to the family's Warwickshire estate, Ragley. But though the two were sequestered together for days, Greatrakes was unable to banish Anne Conway's headaches. She became his most famous failure.

Or did she? Through her, Greatrakes gained access to an elite philosophical circle whose center was Conway herself. It included Robert Boyle, then at work on a "continuation" of his *New Experiments Touching the Spring of the Air* (1661); the Cambridge Platonist Henry More; the Flemish alchemist Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont; and the demonologist, Anglican cleric, and Royal Society Fellow Joseph Glanvill. These luminaries shared a burning interest in the occult, a conceptual category that then encompassed not only what the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "agencies of a mysterious nature" (magic, astrology, alchemy, apparitions) but also physical properties "not manifest to direct observation"—gravity, animal and mineral magnetism, and the like. As the anonymous publisher of *Wonders if Not Miracles* suggests, Greatrakes's "Gift" potentially fit both criteria. So he naturally appealed to the Ragley circle, whose members' letters remain a major archive for information concerning him, even as they express persistent uncertainty about the nature of his gift.[9]

Greatrakes eventually left Warwickshire for a London just emerging from plague's shadow. With the 1665 pandemic now a thing of the past, the

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relatively superficial afflictions in which he specialized again demanded attention. The Stroker obligingly set up shop in the reviving theater district of London's Inns Fields. Here, by his own account, "I laid my Hands on all that came, without regard of Persons, that People might not be disappointed in coming me up and down" (9). A theatrical setting, the flow of crowds, and the spectacle of mobile pain—not to mention the hope that he inspired that the age of miracles might not be entirely passed—guaranteed both Greatrakes's star at the center of controversy and his apotheosis as a folk hero and print sensation. Notables from Andrew Marvell to Jeremy Collier and the ill-fated magistrate Edmund Berry Godfrey bore ambivalent witness to the scenes of healing he orchestrated, while pamphlets both anonymous and signed debated the nature, extent, and ideological import of his powers. Greatrakes is usually understood to have published his own memoir so as to refute the most notable of these, the Welsh translator and divine David Lloyd's savage *Wonders No Miracles*. Healthy self-defense demanded diverse validation strategies. William Faithorne's "true and lively Pourtracture" of the Stroker in the midst of his originary healing of the scrofulous William Maher was printed opposite the title page (Fig. 1) that touted the prestigious addressee of Greatrakes's *Brief Account* ("written by himself"), "the Honourable Robert Boyle." And it was to similar effect that Greatrakes's *Account* "annexed the Testimonials of Several Eminent and Worthy Persons of the chief Matters of Fact therein related."

The "Testimonials" of obscure "Persons" were also "annexed" to create the heterogeneous paratext that makes up just over half of Greatrakes's 96-page account, further dispersing its "I" into a third-person actor in others' first-person accounts. At the same time, as a reader might predict from Boyle's overshadowing name and the title page's insistence that the letters to follow confirm "Matters of Fact," Greatrakes's *Brief Account* also aligns itself with natural philosophy's detailed empirical discourse of witness. That discourse, as Steven Shapin and Michael Hunter have demonstrated, amassed cultural authority as it was sanctioned by the "honourable" Boyle.[10] In Greatrakes's memoir, minutely detailed and unmoralized accounts of various scenes of healing balance no less minute attention to "the circumstances and causes that moved me to attempt practices of this nature" (22), as if to mimic the social scenes and thickly sensuous descriptions through which natural "facts" were both ascertained and confirmed.

Forward-looking though it might seem, the language of fact, even as buttressed by charismatic reputation, leaves much unknown. Greatrakes inexplicably returned to Ireland shortly after his memoir was published. His last seventeen years remain largely a mystery, though he seems to have continued to stroke sporadically until his death in 1683. In a biography treating Greatrakes

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as a canny businessman caught in the cross-currents of seventeenth-century medicine, commerce, and magic, the historian Peter Elmer valiantly attempts to fill in the blanks, unearthing a smattering of business correspondence with Berry Godfrey and a short ode to the fanatic Ludowick Muggleton (Elmer, *Miraculous Conformist* 212–36). By contrast, Jim Nolan's 2001 play *Blackbutter Angel* imagines a later-life Greatrakes shorn not just of his powers but of his faith in them. He is restored to both by a passing female singer.

Nolan and Elmer seem to represent two very different responses to Greatrakes, two different manners of gauging his persistence, and even two different conceptions of medicine as, alternatively, business and theater. Yet both the historical biography and the play draw on elements present in Greatrakes's memoir, which like Robert Boyle's own autobiographical *Life of Philaretus* is no less easily classified as romance than as factual testimony. More striking still, however, is Greatrakes's seeming absence from both history and fiction. In the latter case, he is as an Oxford astrologer in the pages of Iain Pears's 1996 historical thriller *An Instance of the Fingerpost*. Nor is it the historical Greatrakes who turns up as the male protagonist of Michelle Lovric's sensuous 2003 novel *The Remedy*. That honor goes to his imagined eighteenth-century namesake, a fencer of stolen goods with uncannily similar powers of touch. In Susanna Clarke's 2009 novel *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Lovell* nostalgic Regency magicians repair to the Stroker's mansion, which Greatrakes never owned.

Never quite present in characters who nonetheless evoke him, Greatrakes hovers on the periphery of recent historical fiction, marking the point at which fact shades into fantasy. But he occupies a similar position in any number of recent academic studies of seventeenth-century medicine, psychology, miracle, and political theology. For here, too, Greatrakes seldom appears in his own right, serving instead as a stadial index, a marker of transition into modernity. Hence Jane Shaw puts him at a pivotal point in the history of miracles, Harold Weber and J. R. Jacob in that of the so-called king's touch, whose "decline and death" were certified by Marc Bloch, then later revised by Eric Santner's account of their actual migration from the sovereign's charismatic body to those of ordinary "people, who, at least in principle, become the bearers of sovereignty" (Bloch 214; Santner xii). Keith Thomas, Eamon Duffy, Ida McAlpine, and Robert Hunter all regard Greatrakes as a turning point in modernizing psychiatry or in the decline of magic, while historians of the body from A. Bryan Laver to Simon Schaffer put him on the cusp between rising and declining models of the human sensorium.[11]

Both modern history and modern romance recapitulate nineteenth-century social science, the first scene of Greatrakes's revival as a person of interest to Anglophone readers. Along with Franz Mesmer (whose theatrical manipulations

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animal magnetism at the end of the eighteenth century Greatrakes is sometimes said to have anticipated), he features in Charles Mackay's pioneering *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions* (1841) as one of many examples of "the wonderful influence of imagination in the cure of diseases" (148). P. T. Barnum's 1866 *The Humbugs of the World* includes Greatrakes with the likes of Mesmer in a rollicking list of "quacks" and peddlers of "patent medicines, and universal remedies" (15). Such backhanded celebrity profiles cull their version of Greatrakes from earlier wonder books such as William Granger's 1802 *New Wonderful Museum and Extraordinary Magazine* (in which Greatrakes's portrait is recycled and oddly captioned "Mr Nathaniel Greatrakes") or Benjamin Hutchinson's carnivalesque 1799 *Biographica Medica*, with its sensational promise of "the famous Irish Stroker and a very Extraordinary Person" (Hutchinson and Granger 356). Here, as elsewhere, Greatrakes's literary afterlife less consists in our knowledge of this "Extraordinary Person" than keeps him alive by arousing sensations of unresolved wonder.

AURA

These sensations are dynamic. Indeed, in the still-ongoing history of his literary representation, Greatrakes is a vanishing point that actively organizes disciplinary, generic, and historical boundaries even as it evades them. As such, he brings to mind the idea of "aura," a key concept that cuts similarly across disciplines in canonical descriptions of modernity. Across a number of essays written between the great twentieth-century wars, Walter Benjamin intermittently tracks the arrival of modernity through the "decay of aura"—the elusive but defining quality of a work of art that, in Benjamin's oft-cited view, disappears in a so-called age of mechanical reproduction. It is never clear exactly what "aura" is, but Benjamin memorably characterizes it as "a strange web of space and time" ("Little History of Photography" 518; vol. 2). In the original phrase, "ein sonderbares Gespinst aus Raum und Zeit" ("Kleine" 378), Benjamin avails himself of a German word that means "web" but also conjures "ghost" and "fib," identifying the auratic *Gespinst* as "the unique manifestation of a distance, however near it may be" (518; vol. 2). This same formulation applies not just to "aura" but to the concept of it, insofar as aura's disappearance is an imperceptible movement that brings modernity into view. The experience of aura as the quality both of an object and, as an expression of time's movement, is akin to what occurs when we "follow, while reclining on a summer's noon, the outline of a mountain range on the horizon or a branch, which casts its shadow on the observer until the moment or the hour partakes of their presence—this is to breathe in the aura of these mountains, of this branch" (Benjamin, "Little History" 519; vol. 2).

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Aura registers time naturalistically as the epiphenomenon of a sense experience. Drawing on the ancient rhetorical ideal of *praesentia*, Gabriel Josipovici thus proposes that the experience of aura depends "not on distance itself but rather on a carefully sustained tension between distance and proximity"—a tension that Josipovici tellingly epitomizes as the "therapy of distance" (68). Such a therapy gives rise, in Josipovici's view, to an impression of subjective wholeness and self-presence that depends on the absence of immediacy. Josipovici notes that such immediacy was commonly figured as pain by such enlightenment philosphers as George Berkeley (69). In turn, pain's removal, without seeming loss of sensation, offers new possibilities of both self- and world-making. It is in this context that "aura does not abolish distance" but rather "brings distance to life" (10).

In light of its intimate involvement with time, it is strange that Benjamin's concept of aura is so seldom thought to have a prehistory. Josipovici's reference to Berkeley marks a rare attempt to give it one, an effort to reintegrate aura with the experience of human bodily atmospheres. Willem van Reijen pursues this project when he focuses on the "rhetorical figure of breathing" that Benjamin employs in his auratic analogy of the shadow. Van Reijen understands this analogy to figure "a mimetic experience and attitude through which one can experience the harmony between one's natural, social and cultural environment and one's self" (34).[12] The seventeenth-century equivalent to "harmony" would be "conformity"—a keyword in efforts to manage religious dissent during the Restoration as well as in the title of the physician Henry Stubbe's *The Miraculous Conformist* (1666), the most influential of many contemporary representations of Greatrakes. The same word resurfaces as the title of Elmer's 2013 biography of the Stroker.

As for the word "aura," its origins lie in the ancient Greek word for air, *aēr*. As Marina Warner has investigated, *aēr* evokes a tradition that understands the human soul as "at once an emanation of air, an effect of luminescence, and a sensation of presence" (64). Warner finds that the longing to see this essence has long driven Western visual art. Instead of treating it as a quality of the artwork itself, she notes that for centuries artists actively depicted aura as a light around the body—a mandorla that is not just possessed by but actively depicted within it. But until the modern advent of the moving picture, artists could not hope to capture aura's airy fluency, the movement that made it what it was.

In seventeenth-century English, "aura" was still connected to the Greek *aēr* and meant a "lyght wynde meuyd," as the Cornish translator John Trevisa had written in 1398. Well into the eighteenth century, this meaning lingered as aura's only definition, conveying not an object seen so much as a barely tangible movement between and through other objects. In the century after

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Greatrakes's death, "aura" came to mean any diffuse yet directed sensation, of a current of cold air, that rises from one part of the body to the head: "aura" in English was thus eventually personalized and localized within the human body at the same time that it became identified with pain's proleptic residue. In this modernizing medical context, aura turned into a premonitory vision—the shimmering halo seen around things at the onset of migraine, the misleading sensation of cold air in the body before an epileptic attack. Epileptic and migraine auras are not exactly objective. They are projected and temporized illusions of a sickening body, a body en route to invisibility via its failure to conform to norms of health and wholeness. This does not mean that aura is not real: the senses "really" perceive it. But the senses also project aura, distancing it from the sensational guarantors of its presence, its effectual reality.

Aura's relatively submerged history as a feature of bodily experience argues for the accuracy of Jocipovici's translation of Benjamin's "sonderbares Gespinst aus Raum und Zeit" into a "therapy of distance." Benjamin himself likens the painter and the photographer to the magician and the surgeon. The magician "maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself, though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands," while the surgeon "does exactly the reverse" and so "greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body" (Benjamin, "The Work" 233).

At the historical moment of aura's migration into the body, contemporary responses to Greatrakes's "virtue" evoke its emergent duality of light movement and material form. George Rust "refer[red] all [Greatrakes's] virtue to his particular temper and complexion, and [took] his spirits to be a kinde of Elixir and Universal Ferment" (85). Greatrakes's saliva was rumored to make the deaf hear; his urine was said to smell of violets, which were already known in folk medicine as a "specific for dropsy," one of the many disfiguring afflictions he lightly stroked away. Even in the nineteenth century the folklorist Andrew Lang would ironically christen him "Mr Greatrakes, the fragrant and miraculous" (84). Meanwhile, Greatrakes reminded many of his contemporaries to mind of the hyena's legendary power to "strike Dogs dumb with the Urine," of "*Alexanders* casting a sweet perfume," and of the notion that "some creatures can do mischief with a Breath or Touch" (Lloyd 27). Robert Boyle was brought to mind of "divers of [Paul's] miracles [that] were done on absent persons," as well as the "cures intimated to be wrought" by Saint Peter's shadow, for "to come so near as to have that pass over them, was to come within the atmosphere (if I may so call it) which the effluvia of his body made miraculously sanative" (Boyle lxxvi; vol. 1).

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Greatrakes's personal atmosphere was at once unique to his body and somehow not confined to it. To capture this duality, some spoke of "ferment." Others turned to lexicons that have since disappeared. "By what juice this strange transmutation should be made," the physician Jeremiah Astell demurred, "I leave to others more learned to enquire into" (93). Greatrakes himself challenged skeptics "but [to] tell me what substance that is which removes and goes out with so great expedition" (35). To locate Greatrakes's virtue in his smell and shadow was to dislocate him from substance. While this deepened the mystery of his identity, it also brought him into virtual contact with the pain-wracked bodies of others. In narratives concerning him, the healer retrieves his patients into wholeness while often only briefly and superficially touching them, with the result that the bodies and the persons inside them become more visible than his own.

Both Boyle and the Platonist Henry More provided formal models that could explain the "strange transinuation" that shaped Greatrakes's healing performances. More's *An Antidote against Atheism* (1653) had already proposed an abstruse "Spirituall substance that is able to move and actuate all Matter" (244). After meeting Greatrakes and studying his auratic healing style, Boyle appended some "Notes, &c. about the Atmospheres of Consistent Bodies Here Below" to his 1669 *Continuation of New Experiments*, speculating that "betwixt visible bodies and spiritual beings there is a middle sort of agents." Such "agents," Boyle supposed, could arise even from a hard body that "seems to have something of toughness or tenacity in it." Boyle emphasized the role that manual action played in releasing, expressing, and diffusing this ambient essence. For example, "amber, hard-wax, and many other electrical bodies do, when they are rubbed, emit effluviums." Manual acts of rubbing, polishing, and chafing allowed Boyle to claim that "even those [bodies] that are solid may (at least sometimes) have their little atmospheres" (Boyle 65, 69; vol. 3).

Fleetingly captured in texts with titles like *Rub No Rub*, Valentine Greatrakes's "little atmospheres" were at once unique and generated reciprocally through his virtual contact with other bodies. This duality pervades, thus integrates, otherwise contradictory expositions of his personal virtue. More imagined that Greatrakes's body might work the way communicable disease does, only in reverse, to promote health via a process that More called "sanative Contagion" (*Enthusiasmus* 58). Even Anglican skeptics were prompted to "adde a line touching his *Crasis* or Temperature," thereby raising the possibility that Greatrakes healed "by virtue of his . . . Complexion." The dissenting physician Henry Stubbe noted an "agreeableness of smell in Mr *Greatrakes* body," which quality Stubbe "place[d] in the Temperament of his Body"—"a particular Temperament or implanted Ferment" that, "upon his touching and

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thing shall so farre invigorate the blood, spirits, and innate temperament like part" (14).

Greatrakes's "little atmospheres" also distinguished him from other pain specialists: faith practitioners like Fox; celebrity doctors like Charles II's attendants William Quaterman, John Archer, and Gideon Harvey; and ultimately the entire class of physicians that was increasingly eager to shore up its prestige against surgeons and apothecaries, largely through increasing abstraction from the body and reliance on books and images as both sources of knowledge and public relations tools.[13] As if to split the differences among these practitioners' industry profiles, Greatrakes's aura at once distanced him as a specifically gifted person and bound him intimately to those he touched. Stubbe thus "admired much in him," including not only his "graceful personage and presence" but his vivacitie and sprightliness that is nothing common" (A3v). Yet at the same time Stubbe could spy "no *incongruity* in admitting, that *God*, who distributes various gifts amongst the Sonnes of Men, might issue out the *same* gift to the overall persons in a *different measure* or proportion" (5).

Greatrakes's "divers" performances also orchestrated interactions between diverse "persons." His specific "gift" manifested through those interactions. It arose from his effects upon them at least as much as it caused those effects. One woman, for example,

> had somewhat within her which would swell her Body to that excessive degree on a sudden as if it would burst her; and then as soon as I put my hand on that part of her body where it did rise up, it would fly up to her Throat . . . and choak her, and force her eyes to start out of her head . . . and sometimes fly into her hand, and so contract and fasten it, that [no one] that did try (as there were many) could with all their strength open one finger of her hand; nor would it fly his hand in the least, nor any persons there, till I put my hand on it, or my glove; nay, I oftentimes brought it up into her Tongue (by running my hand on her Body, on the out-side of her Cloathes, up to her Throat), which it has swoln in an instant nigh as big again, and has been seen plainly to play from place to place, and at length with great violence of belching (which did almost choak her, and force her eyes to start out of her head) it went forth, and so the Woman went away well. (34)

In such accounts, the movements of the Stroker's hand ("or my glove") on the outside of [the] clothes" elicit continual transitions between visible and invisible effects, coordinating them until the patient appears as "well." Such agencies achieve *praesentia*. But they could also multiply wildly in commercial space; Greatrakes giddily swore that he "could instance you fourty as strange or stranger" (34). Stubbe, too, saw that healing entailed making strange bodies perceptible across a range of sensory possibilties. He thus was

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able to "conceive I have represented those hints and proofs which may render it imaginable that Mr *Greataricks* by his stroking may introduce an oppressed Fermentation into the Blood and Nerves" (Stubbe 14). Stubbe further prompted his reader "to see that those effects which are so admired, upon the stroking of Mr *Greataricks* Hand . . . are the effects of Nature invigorated, and not immediately of his Touching" (14). Distance-touching uncovers the spiritualized "effects of Nature." These at once take discernible shape around Greatrakes's person and are realized through "his Touching." They can never be known for sure.

It is because they illuminated the unstable borders of personal identity that Greatrakes's auratic therapies beg us to see them through anthropology's lens. Indeed, his healing arts converge with textual praxis to mimic traditional cultural practices in which aura applies not to art objects but to the personality styles of the living as these are both accessed and, when damaged, restored through shamanistic ritual. From this perspective, the Irish Stroker himself appears less as a historical actor than as a mythic figure at large in a culture that both represented and experienced its modernity through literacy. For example, the anthropologist Carol Laderman's classic study of Malaysian healing techniques traces them to the practical belief—common to the shaman, his subject, and their audience—in *angin* or inner winds. *Angin* are specific "temperaments, depleted and erased in illness but made perceptible anew by a shaman who invokes their typical stories through ritualized narrative" (Laderman 14). Bruce Kapferer finds a similar principle at work in the generalized forms of aesthetic judgment that arise within Sri Lankan shamanism. Here wholeness is produced by making sick bodies notionally visible within a virtual world, one realized within an ethereal communicative system that moves between bodies (129–60).

To the extent that the shaman's virtual touch works through interpersonal aura, findings like those of Kapferer and Laderman echo Benjamin's contemporary, the German psychologist David Katz. Katz's 1925 book *Der Aufbau der Tastwelt* (*The World of Touch*) remarks that "the moving atmosphere strikes us subjectively as an immersed touch"—an experience that "may well have prompted (so-called) primitive people to make animistic interpretations of inanimate natural processes" (52). Katz further notes that immersive touch affords perception of a spiritual *Aufbau* (structure) that encompasses and transcends particular persons. *Aufbau*'s transpersonality and contingency are "psychological roots for the physical concepts of impenetrability, resistance, and strength" (52).

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SHADOW PLAY

The transpersonal is evoked in the frontispiece of Greatrakes's *Brief Account*, which was adapted from William Faithorne's painting of Greatrakes healing his first subject, the scrofulous William Maher. Faithorne was, and remains, best known for the frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), bits of whose political iconography promising the figural unity of the body politic appear have been transposed to the window in the background (Fig. 2). That unity is also less directly present: Jamie C. Kassler captures Hobbes's assumption that bodies are elastic, compressible, and mutually penetrable within a "continuous medium" (3). In *Leviathan*, a book worried about how people might thus form a rational commonwealth, this makes bodies vulnerable to political exploitation by the religious, folkloric, and superstitious traditions that Hobbes figures as the "Kingdom of Darkness."

Although it provokes no such anxiety, there is significant darkness in *A Brief Account*'s frontispiece. The shadow in the foreground is a feature exaggerated from Faithorne's original oil portrait, possibly arising from the mechanical print medium to which it has been transferred. But while it seems to interfere with our clear perception of this scene and the person at its center, the shadow exploits what Michael Baxandall calls a "rococo-empiricist" technique of realization. Here seventeenth-century artists were learning to manipulate shadows—holes in light—to make two-dimensional, flat objects on a canvas feel dimensional, present, endowed with "real surfaces" (Baxandall 8).[13]

Locke would later puzzle over shadows' unique appeal to two senses at once, their role in the act of perception, if not in the verification of its contents as real or unreal. When the "Judgment" is confronted with a shaded circle in two-dimensional space, he speculated, it must splice these two sensory registers to "frame to itself the perception of a convex Figure." The shadows must produce the illusion of the sphere thus also bind the sense of touch to that of sight. This binding allows sight to double as touch, while drawing upon touch's security to correct the eye's deceits. In one of the most famous incidents in Locke's *Essay*, the suspended ontology of shadow allows blind men who have regained their sight to recognize objects they once knew by touch alone (Locke 96–97). Yet from a modern perspective that seeks to stabilize identity through representation, shadows are treacherous anchors of personal identity. Locke conceded that "the Picture of a Shadow is a positive Thing" (133). But it seemed equally true that "the Shadow of a Man" can "cause as clear and positive an Idea in the Mind, as a Man himself, though cover'd over with clear Sun-shine" (133). Disconcertingly, shadows might even be the substance of positive ideas: Locke after all likens them to "unregarded Shadows"

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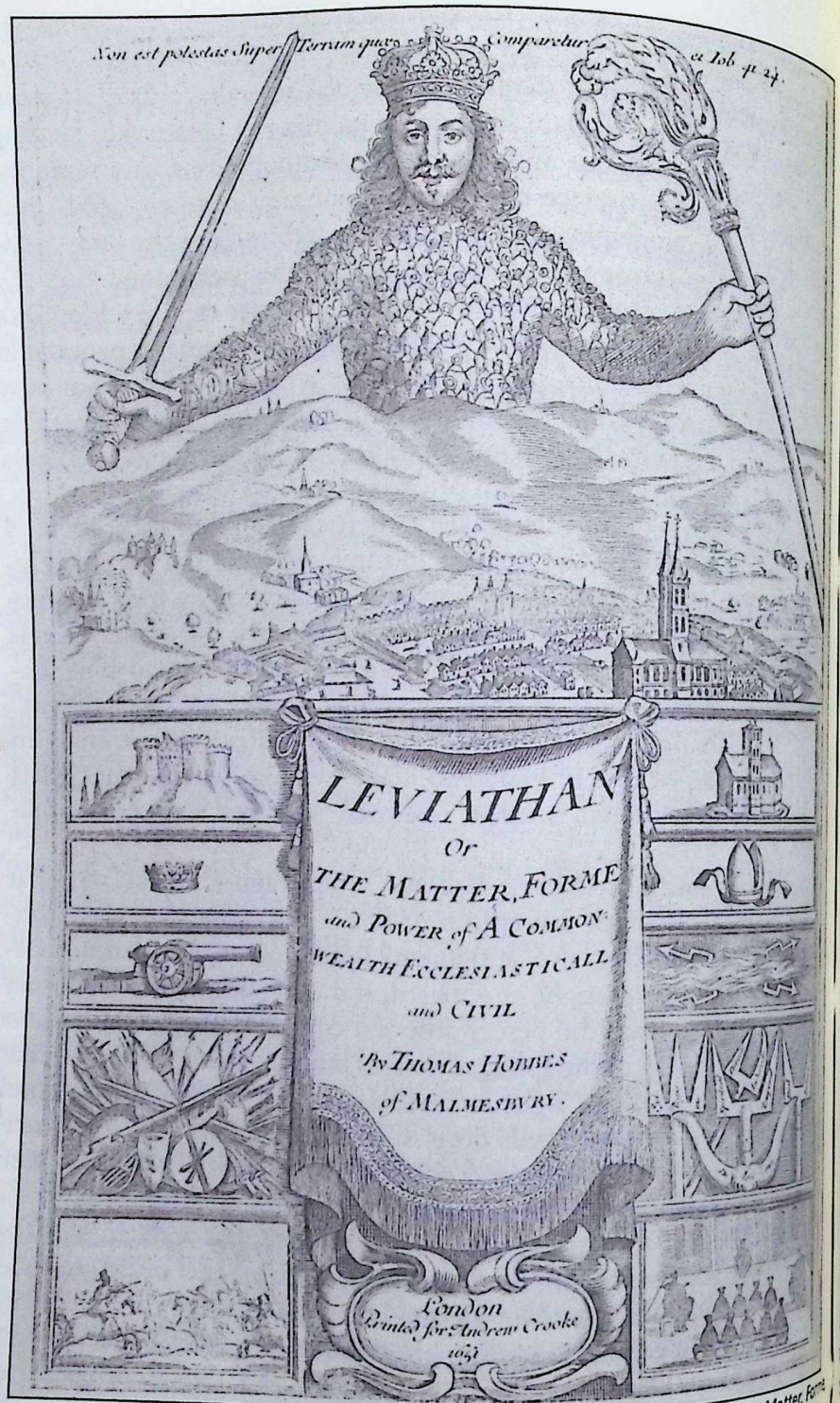

Figure 2. William Faithorne, frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan; or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth* (1651).

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don't fade as "Shadows do flying over Fields of Corn" (151). Even if "Shadows" are only metaphors, their incalculable substance is enough like metaphor to render this a chilling thought.

As they do in Locke's philosophy of mind, shadows ambiguously aid the acquisition and representation of positive empirical knowledge in a self-consciously modernizing natural philosophy. As Meghan C. Doherty has shown, such knowledge developed not just through observation and writing but also through art, as exemplified in Robert Hooke's adaptation of contemporary painterly techniques for transferring three-dimensional images into the two dimensions of the printed page. Doherty finds Hooke determined to "forswea[r] the role of imagination in his work"; this involved rejection of shadow as a distortion of reality and an obstacle to accuracy. "We often take the shadow of things for the *substance*," Hooke moralizes in the preface to his his 1666 treatise *Micrographia* (A2r). He complains that the difficulty of "distinguish[ing] . . . between and *shadow* and a *black stain*" hinders the discovery of a "true form" (A12r). Just so, while demonstrating that the technology of the picture book produces complete objects of knowledge, Sachiko Kusukawa finds early anatomists and botanists repudiating the shadows that could blot out the "true form" of depicted objects (134).

Both Doherty and Kusukawa speak to the role that visual and textual representation played in the scientific securing of natural bodies as positive objects of human knowledge. From this point of view, shadows were surely vital to the very process that they appeared to block. For instance, when Hooke tried to ascertain the "Structure and motion of the Wings of Flies," he succeeded only when he managed "by a faint shadow [to] perceive the utmost extremes of the vibrative motion of their wings, which shadow, whil'st they so endeavoured to suspend themselves, was not very long, but when they endeavour'd to flie forwards" (Hooke 172). It was "from the shadow or faint representation the wings afforded" that he was able to "ghess the posture or manner of the wings moving between them" (172). Horst Bredekamp likewise establishes the role that "shadow theater" played in producing theaters of knowledge for Greatrakes's contemporary Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). Such findings correspond to recent recoveries of seventeenth-century scientific writing's romance elements and mythemic qualities, even as these were pressed into the service of "empirical and technological discovery" (Pressons 5).

As if to exemplify the shift between visual and verbal modes that Chartier finds to be one of the signature features of the seventeenth century's experimental culture of print, in Faithorne's image, Greatrakes's shadow cannot be separated from literary communication. Enfolded in a written document, his

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shadow clearly works within the rococo-empirical aesthetic principle while also presupposing popular rumors regarding Greatrakes's "little atmospheres." But even in the image itself, shadow is a sphere of reciprocity. For there are two shadows: Greatrakes's own, projected onto the afflicted Maher, and Maher's, attached to his own shoulder but seeming, strangely, also to belong to Greatrakes. While Greatrakes's hands are depicted as the agent of healing and of connection with the sick boy, it is his eye that draws the viewer into the canvas. Shadow thus synchronizes viewer and healer, eye and touch, text and non-text, reality and image, self and other. For the reader of *A Brief Account*, shadow both activates strange imagination and asserts that such an imagination is the experiential prerequisite of our encounter with any object in this world.

THE AURATIC PAGE

One year before Greatrakes's *Brief Account* appeared in print, Hooke's *Micrographia* identified the "variation" that shadows introduce into any visual surface with the "irregularity" that besets visible words, "both *printed* ones and *written*." Such words, Hooke found when he slid some lines of Scripture under his microscope, are plagued by various ills. In particular, "those points that had been made by a *Copper-plate*, and Roll-press" proved "to be as mishapen as those which had been made with *Types*, the most curious and smothly *engraven strokes* and *points*, looking but as so many *furrows* and *holes* and their *printed impressions*, but like *smutty daubings* on a matt or uneven floor. . . . And as for *points* made with a *pen* they were much *more rugged* and *deformed*." Hooke named the "Coadjutors" of these "*Irregularities*": "the *uneven surface* of the *paper*," "the *irregularity of the Type* or *Ingraving*," the *rough Daubing* of the *Printing-Ink* . . . to all which, add the *variation* made by the Different *lights* and *shadows*" (Hooke 4). Hooke's inventory helps us see how Greatrakes's own writing might have aligned itself with the healer's auratic shadow. Their synchrony is salient since Hooke's project of producing accurate knowledge of physical objects through visible and verbal representation coincides with that of modern life writers who aim to verify their presence in the abstracted body of letters. Greatrakes's sanative shadow seems to have been destined for print for other reasons as well: this insecure medium was keen to establish its prestige and authority by moving between abstracted ideations and tangible objects. His contemporaries certainly craved assurance as to the nature of his gifts and the ethos of the person who possessed them. But it was Greatrakes's dynamic kinship with a medium in transition to its unknown future that made him a hot commodity in London's explosive

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pamphlet trade. Print, not performance, projected his physical body both out and into the fray of seventeenth-century literate culture.

The things written of him invariably disagreed. "Some take him to be a *Conjurer*, and some, an *Impostor*," George Rust noted, adding that none-theless "others again adore him as an *Apostle*" (92). Addressed (unsolicited) to Boyle, Stubbe's adulatory portrait of the "miraculous conformist" drew a caustic riposte from the Welsh divine and translator David Lloyd. Broadside ballads bearing provocative titles like *Rub No Rub* hailed Greatrakes as their hero, scoffing in jocular dactyls at sneering pamphlets like the anonymous "Detection of the Imposture of Mr. V. G." In time, More, Glanvill, and even Boyle weighed in on the specific question of "imposture." Of the three, Boyle was the most skeptical, and the most anxious about the risk that certifying Greatrakes's authenticity posed to his own public image. To More and Glanvill, however, Greatrakes afforded long-sought evidence of an invisible world of spirits—a world that, relieved of the stigma of folklore and superstition, could be demonstrated at once through and to the rationalized senses.

For our purposes, what matters is that Greatrakes's *Brief Account* took shape in the same print environment already thick with writing about him. It was apparently the appearance of Lloyd's bilious little book, *Wonders, No Miracles*, in late April of 1666 that provoked Greatrakes into print early the next month. Shortly thereafter, as we have seen, the Stroker vanished. In his place, English readers were left with *A Brief Account* of his exploits—one that would be even briefer were it not for the body of personal and eyewitness "Testimonials" that take up the pamphlet's second half. These firsthand accounts of the "strange cures" that Greatrakes "perform'd" are of a piece with the literature of prodigy, wonder, and dramatic portent that exploded in the nervous-making annus *mirabilis*, 1666. As David Alff has shown, the boom in such publications coincides with "shifting contemporary political contexts, print shop labor configurations, copyright arrangements, and even the geographical repositioning of bookshops around Restoration London" (21). Such changes made literary texts active players in a volatile cultural scene whose only law was deviation.

The diverse authors of the texts that took Greatrakes as their topic hailed from across the seventeenth-century social spectrum. Their numbers included not only ordinary shopkeepers, tenants, and housewives but also fellows of the Royal Society, reputable physicians, Cambridge dons, and a handful of eminent Anglican bishops. Peter Elmer theorizes Greatrakes's "appea[l] to a wide range of people who for a variety of reasons shared a common concern and anxiety for the fate of the church and state in Restoration England" (*Miraculous Conformist* 104). That appeal, in Elmer's view, made Greatrakes a folk

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hero deemed capable of healing the "sickening divisions" wrought by the last civil wars (74). Elmer's persuasive interpretation posits the normative and ra tionalized "body politic" charted by Michel Foucault and envisioned by the royalist Hobbes—a nascent paradigm of "medical perception" in which sick bodies are aberrant and health equals conformity with statistical, social, philo sophical, and aesthetic ideals. While Greatrakes's *Brief Account* may ultimately have supported these ideals, his auratic therapy of distance also points in a different direction: we have seen that he sought less to eliminate pain than to move it into a common sensual register that allows a multiplicity of noncon forming bodies to become perceptible as formal wholes. Of these, Greatrakes's own body is at once the most present, if—strangely—the least visible.

A surfeit of writing about him suggests that the Irish Stroker seems to have made as many writers as he did healthy persons. As we saw, testimonials from the "Hands" of these individuals lend his *Brief Account* the heteroglossic quality of a novel. They also blur the boundaries of the first-person "I" that speaks in the memoir itself. As a letter "to the Honourable Robert Boyle, Es quire," Greatrakes's writing merges with the second-person "you," soon ad mitting a *second* second person in the form of David Lloyd, whom Greatrakes also addresses. Or rather he addresses Lloyd's "Pamphlet touching me and that Talent which God has entrusted me . . . withal." Greatrakes rebuffs the pamphlet's attempts to "touc[h]" him as "so various and fabulous, that I con ceive my self in conscience bound to leave a Testimony of Truth behind me." It's to this end that Greatrakes tenders "a brief and true Narrative of my self from my birth to this instant" (14–15).

We easily notice the "true" claim that Greatrakes makes for his "Narrative of my self." But what he says first is that his narrative will be "brief." "Brief" means fleeting; it binds the time of writing to the time of reading. "Brief" might also refer to letters of credit, a sense that persists in legal contexts today. In Greatrakes's own day, a brief was also a marked deck of playing cards, the edges of some of which were invisibly—but tangibly—nicked for purposes of deception. Greatrakes's "Account" is "brief" in this sense as well. It is a body we are supposed to touch, not quite knowingly. Yet its virtue arises from its light movement away from us, as this becomes a form of contact and a conduction of *praesentia*. In this same spirit, the Stroker twice describes his writing as "an account of my life from my birth to this Instant" (14). When is "this Instant"? It would seem to be whenever Greatrakes enters the widened perceptual field. It is also the instance in which he perceives himself: the "instant" of reading that is also the "instant" in which Greatrakes's "hand" offers its "brief." The shared brevity of these instants makes that hand's writing (strokes of one kind) and its healing (strokes of another) instances of one another.

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The Irish Stroker's *Brief Account* tenders, in this sense, a textual supplement to the auratic body; it identifies its author as a transitional effect that is distant in its nearness. "Greatrakes" thus presents himself not as a version of the stroking man who occupies solid space in Faithorne's image but rather as an extension of the therapeutic shadow that haunts it. Speaking as such a shadow, Greatrakes aims to deflect the "slandering of a Stranger" (9), one who at first would seem to be Lloyd but who turns out to be Valentine Greatrakes himself—made a "Stranger," he points out, because he has been "represented . . . in such black Characters, as if I were so horrid a Monster that my very name should affright the Reader" (4). Mounted in this strangely split second person, Greatrakes's "I" can only refer itself to the shadowy "black Characters" that represent it on the page. Strangely writing of himself in the third person, the Stroker conjures that shadow again when he claims that "his poor fellow-creatures' . . . Distempers . . . caused him cheerfully . . . to cast all his worldly pleasures and delights behind his back" (3). A self-depleting, back-casting shadow that puts the autobiographical subject in the "hands" of all can seem stagey, even sanctimonious. But it also signals the presence of Greatrakes's personal virtue just inside the perceptual field of his reader.

In all of these ways, *A Brief Account* gives us a person who is also the projection of the senses of others. The text reattaches self to shadow, while moving that self's specular core to its tangible periphery. As if to solicit the "strange imagination" that made his wife laugh, Greatrakes's story is the "strange" history of a self as "other," a uniquely mythic self that was before and is ever more about to be. This stranger begs to be known as much to the touch as to the eye. Of course, the thing about reading is that we touch nothing but the book (or touchscreen) we're holding; we see nothing but letters. Yet this very distance potentially opens new life for the modernizing imagination, a faculty that the English essayist Joseph Addison would eventually depict as a "more delicate and diffusive kind of Touch" (536; vol. 3).

In contrast to the historical Valentine Greatrakes who moved across parts of England and Ireland in the middle of the 1660s, the "Greatrak's" who narrates (half of) *A Brief Account* may have touched his percipients *only* as a literary phenomenon. Most of the "Testimonials" that round out *A Brief Account* are dated the April before the memoir's publication on May 10, already an amazingly few days after Lloyd's attack. In nothing short of a publishing miracle, *A Brief Account* anticipated the work that appears to be its own precipitant. A handwritten note inside the British Library's bound volume containing both Lloyd's attack and Greatrakes's reply very naturally worries that "Lloyd's 'Pamphlet should have been bound first in this book—as its publication drew forth Greatreaks's reply and defence which now is first." In textual

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space—and reading time—Greatrakes's memoir thus appears, anachronistically, before the work to which it responds: it must in effect disappear to appear as "true." And spatial representation is strangely mingled with temporal fluctuation. Their mingling is registered in the book's physical body, where the verso pages have "*Wonders No Miracles*" as their running title while the recto pages reverse this phrase with "*Miracles No Wonders*." Likewise, in the memoir itself, Greatrakes's typographical "I" references not only himself as he is known to himself but also, in one stroke, both Lloyd's "black character" and the "Stranger" that that character simultaneously shaped and slandered. Greatrakes's "I" turns out to be less referential than expressive of a relation between multiple versions (or projections) of the person. In this manner, Greatrakes's *Brief Account* literally casts "my self" as stranger, a shadow in Benjamin's auratic—and Josipovici's therapeutic—sense. Here modern markers of selfhood, even its "I," recede before they are yet in place.

Modern literate experience of Greatrakes requires this distance. Because it does, Greatrakes's passing "strange" memoir proposes an expressive rather than an archival source of the autobiographical subject. As such, *A Brief Account* truly materializes only in the psychosomatic contact zones between mutually projected bodies. Such reciprocities anticipate Benjamin's observation that "to perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return" ("On Some" 188). They also defy the barriers that conventionally divide representational worlds from worlds of sensation. Many of the testimonials that round out *A Brief Account* easily clear these same barriers: having "observed strange things performed by him," the author of one professes himself to have been "early hurried with an earnest desire of seeing. . . . Agues cured with easie frictions" (69). But this impulse cannot be distinguished from the one that "hath ever induced me to improve all my pleasure in observing Mr. Greatraks his Cures or Operation, the like whereof (I presumed) will hardly be found in any Author" (69).

These days, Mr. Greatrakes shows up when authors want their readers to sense their own literary experience *as* experience. He does so regardless of genre and its attendant, variable truth claims. In Lovric's novel *The Remedy*, "Valentine Greatrakes" is an eighteenth-century small-time criminal and dabbler in alternative medicine to whom the historical Greatrakes's very touch, along with his "stink of violet perfume" (Lovric 287) and "exuberant poetry of gesture" (348) has been transferred: "His antique Irish namesake, the famous healer Valentine Greatrakes, was said to be able to cure scrofula with his bare hands; now Valentine Greatrakes of Bankside uses his fingers to stroke away . . . fear and trembling" (127). This Valentine's Venetian lover declares

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that "I loved the romance of [his] gesture" and adds that "It was true. I . . . strongly liked the *style* of the man" (417).

"Greatrakes" also makes a telling non-appearance on the edges of sensation in Pears's *An Instance of the Fingerpost*. Pears's salient title is taken from one of Francis Bacon's passing remarks on the ephemeral nature of evidence. In the murder mystery that follows, Greatrakes features neither as faith healer nor as a memoirist. He is, somehow, an astrologer. The "fingerpost" that Bacon (and later Pears) instances is the finger-shaped graphic mark that appears in the margin of a page to call attention to a particular line of text—technically, we could say that a fingerpost both is and gives the impression of something that was never there. It nonetheless guides the conditioned eye to see something that is there; more exactly, it directs the eye to think it sees through the designated characters to something that isn't there after all. Yet the eye's movement in real time makes that something into an experience.

The same phenomenon animates the supposedly factual genre of contemporary life writing. *A Small Moment of Great Illumination* (2007) is the San Francisco mime artist Leonard Pitt's aptly titled, aptly brief popular biography of Greatrakes. The press that published it is not prestigious. It is currently out of print. But it ends with a series of anecdotal "anomalies" that integrate Pitt with the still distant figure of Greatrakes. These move backward to a founding "moment" in Pitt's own journey when he shakes hands with the friend who has agreed to act as his research assistant on the Greatrakes project: "Just as we shook hands, I felt my right arm shoot back over my shoulder and reach off behind me into the distance and touch Greatrakes's hand," Pitt reports. "Strange in the extreme, yes. At that moment, I thought it was strange and I still think it's strange today. But there it was. . . . If one wonders how I knew it was Greatrakes, I don't know. I just knew" (184–85).

Who knows if this is "true" or not, if the person of interest is "really" there? Does it matter? Elmer, regrettably, dismisses Pitt as "an American enthusiast." But as a mime artist, Pitt must make visible movement suggest the presence of the invisible—a technique that suits him to the Stroker's aura. Another such technique is Pitt's willingness to know without knowing—to "just know." This would seem to be exactly how Greatrakes came to know (and not know) himself. It is not how we tend to know ourselves, but by entertaining the possibility that it might be, the Irish Stroker's memoir builds a shadowy, transpersonal world of "strange imagination"—and with it a potential hospital for the suffering modern self.

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NOTES

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1. The definitive discussion of the stabilization of "biographical exemplarity" appears in McKeon ("Biography"). Sharpe and Zwicker note the absence of "clear notions of evidence and archive" (9) in seventeenth-century life writing in favor of often "fragmentary," irregular, performative, and transgeneric models of personal identity. John Dryden's 1683 *Life of Plutarch* is widely credited as the first instance of the word "biography" in English. On Aubrey's "tumultar[y]" and "occasional" *Brief Lives* and their resonance with an unsettled life writing culture, see Bennett.
2. Healing is also the common trope in Arthur W. Frank's seminal survey of a range of narrative structures based on the plots of restitution, chaos, and quest in present-day illness narrative.
3. Greatrakes's "Impulse" was often decoupled from the voices and visions claimed by radical Puritans and increasingly labeled as markers of fanaticism and "enthusiasm." It could thus appear as a sign of legitimacy, modernity, and non-sectarianism. At the same time, however, the prominence of self-confidence in the story of Greatrakes's efficacy as a healer eerily recapitulates a premise of ancient magic still underpinning early modern Platonism: here, according to Ioan P. Couliano, "the magician able to practice his art has first practiced it on himself" (130).
4. As Susan Stewart puts it, "the pressure involved in touch is a pressure on ourselves as well as on objects," and the sense of touch has been both historicized and theorized in relation to its uniquely intersubjective nature by any number of recent scholars (162).
5. Unless otherwise noted, italics in quotations are as in the original.
6. J. R. Jacob pioneered in *Robert Boyle and the English Revolution* (164–76) the thesis that Greatrakes posed a threat to Charles's reinstitution of the royal touch, though Harold Weber examines Charles's actual indifference to Greatrakes's potentially competitive performances in *Paper Bullets* (77–81).
7. Scarry's brilliant account of "the relationship between expressing pain and eliminating pain" emphasizes the role that pain's inherent "inexpressiblity" plays in the formation of social and political imaginaries (11).
8. This duality might be schematized in terms of the coexistence of two different time senses during the Restoration—one material, quantitative, abstract, and chronological, the other durational, qualitative, sensory, and phenomenological. For the emergence of the former view, see Sherman. On the persistence of the latter as a feature of eighteenth-century aesthetics, philosophy, and fiction, see Yahav.
9. See especially Nicolson (244–308). The still mysterious etiology of Conway's migraines is discussed in Owen. Among Conway's many strategies for "obtaining a cure," according to the contemporary physician Thomas Willis, were taking "the air of several Countries, besides her own Native Air" (569); Willis decided, in contrast to Greatrakes, that Conway's headaches were "a Scirrhous Distemper of Dura mater" (270). Another theory, Owen notes, was syphilis.

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the "Honourable" Boyle's prestige was often crucial to these modes of verification (see Hunter). On the social character of scientific witness during the Restoration, see Shapin. Keith Thomas reserves judgment on the nature of Greatrakes's healing powers though implies that they addressed illnesses that were mainly psychosomatic in nature. Following O. B. Appleyard, Thomas essentially accepts the verdict reached in the psychiatric historians Ida McAlpine and Robert Hunter's important "Valentine Greatrakes and Divers of the Strange Cures by Him Lately Performed' on Patients in St Bartholomew's Hospital in 1666." Elmer takes up the politics of Greatrakes's medicine in *The Miraculous Conformist* (11–49).

Van Reijen emphasizes the atmospheric dimension of Benjamin's aura, along with the systolic and diastolic aspects of experiencing that dimension, to suggest that Benjamin's aura included a complex account of bodily experience, one that redefines mimesis itself in relation to the movements of the receptive and creative human body.

Roy Porter and others have charted the physican class's new quest for prestige through the adoption of scientific instruments as tools of diagnosis and through the firming up of the hierarchy organizing the medical classes—divided vertically among apothecaries, surgeons, elite members of the Royal College of physicians. As Porter has demonstrated, seventeenth-century medicine was not a matter of "technical proficiency, scientific breakthroughs and cure-rates" but rather a "repository of texts and tenets, advice and apothegms, 'sick roles' and 'well roles,' teachings and practices to be respected—or reviled—for their theatrical, spectacular, and even magical aspects" (22).

Baxandall's "empiricist" taxonomy of shadow forms on the late seventeenth-century canvas links their aesthetic and psychological value—a value captured in the overlap in Feithorne's image of what Baxandall calls "cast shadow" and "projected shadow" (56–60).

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PUTTING LIVES ON THE RECORD
THE BOOK AS MATERIAL AND SYMBOL IN LIFE WRITING

ANNA POLETTI

In recent years, the study of life writing has become increasingly attentive to the role of the book in the production and circulation of life narratives. Gillian Whitlock's important work on the movement of life writing across national borders in the "war on terror" (*Soft Weapons*), Julie Rak's analysis of the rise of memoir as a best-selling genre in America (*Boom!*), and Kate Douglas's careful consideration of the production and sale of memoirs of childhood (*Contesting Childhood*) all situate the book as a contemporary media form that has specific affordances, practices of circulation, and modes of preservation that shape life writing. These studies of contemporary life writing are attentive to the placement of self-representation within specific material conditions that include commercial, technological, logistical, and ideological factors. Diary scholars, too, have discussed how the logic of the book, as the privileged medium for making knowledge consequential, structures both academic work on life writing and public engagement with autobiography beyond the book (Temple).

My contribution to these lines of inquiry in this article is to offer a different view of the relationship between life writing and the book by considering how research in the fields of book and media history can inform our understanding of the book as both a medium and a symbol that has been central to the practice and the scholarship of life writing. This article is a first attempt to think about how arguments and findings from these fields might shape the study of autobiography. Book history is, as Robert Darnton notes, a diverse and vibrant field that encompasses the study of publishing, authorship, and reading. As the work of Lisa Gitelman demonstrates, it may also be thought of as a component of the history of communication. As a large and very productive site of research, this area of study has much to offer our field; this

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article can only scratch the surface of what might come from bringing autobiography and book and media history together. Moreover, the scratch I make is shaped by my own preoccupations, and it is my hope that the shortcomings of this paper spur further engagement and intersection between the fields.

My core interest is to use book and media history to examine the material conditions of the fundamental premise in life writing studies: that life narrative is a genre that puts personal experience "on the record."[1] Following the turn to the book by scholars such as Johanna Drucker, N. Katherine Hayles, Leah Price, Peter McDonald, and Karin Littau, I historicize and theorize the book *as a form of media* used for life writing and consider the role autobiographical discourse itself has played at key points in the book's history in establishing the book as a trusted and privileged medium. Taking my lead from Lisa Gitelman's careful critique of a monolithic view of "print culture" (*Paper* 1–10), I focus on the mid-twentieth century as a specific moment in the history of autobiography, literary studies, and the book. When autobiography scholarship began in earnest in the mid-twentieth century, the materiality of the book was all but invisible to literary theorists and critics.[2] This article is an attempt to explore the legacies of that coincidence.

In what follows I bring book and media history into conversation with life writing studies through Jean-Paul Sartre's 1963 autobiography *Les Mots* (*The Words*), a work published at the height of the book's privileged—and largely invisible—status in literary culture. *The Words* consistently narrates the powerful specificity of the book as a medium. I juxtapose Sartre's moment of writing with one example from the history of printing and one from the history of authorship that illuminate the role of autobiography in "the way books come into being and spread through society" (Darnton 10). There is some debate regarding appropriate terms for the study of what some refer to as the "history of books' or 'the history of the book'" (Darnton 9), "print culture" (Gitelman, "Print Culture" 183–85) or the study of history of authorship, reading, and publishing (as designated by the name of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing). Following Gitelman's lead, I refer to distinct histories of print and authorship, while also seeking to illuminate how these influence the larger question of "the cultural meaning of the codex form itself," what is sometimes referred to as "bookness" (Crain 156) or explored under the rubric of "bookishness" (Pressman). How autobiography studies might reflect upon the ways in which, to use Patricia Crain's phrase, "a format [the codex] became a value [the book]" (156) could not come at a more important time given the expansion of the genre of autobiography across media formats (McNeill and Zuern). Thus, my aim in this article is to consider Gitelman's point that "The histories of genres and the histories of media don't so much overlap as they intersect, constituting partial and mutual conditions for one another" (*Paper* 10).

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THE WORDS OR THE MEDIUM?

Widely understood as Sartre's farewell to literature and his rejection of the tradition of belles lettres as a bourgeois fantasy, *The Words* is an autobiography of Sartre's childhood. The work focuses on what Sartre sees as the two defining elements of his formative years: his experience of being born into freedom as a result of his father's death in the first year of his life, and his inculcation into his grandfather's religion of humanism through the worship of belles lettres and books. For the adult narrator of *The Words*, his worship of books and belief in the power of literature is a neurosis that enabled him to write the many novels, plays, and philosophical works that defined the man known as Sartre: "Without this fundamental illusion, I should never have written" (46). In *The Words*, Sartre diagnoses the "neurosis" that enabled his literary career from the perspective of his awakened political consciousness and his abandonment of the bad faith that was the belief in his identity as a writer. Of his youthful belief in that identity, Sartre writes:

> I saw my birth as a necessary evil, a purely temporary incarnation that was making ready my transfiguration: to be reborn you had to write and to write you needed a brain, eyes, and arms. Your work done, those organs would be reabsorbed into themselves: round about 1955, a larva would burst and twenty-five folio butterflies would escape, feverishly beating their pages, and settle on a shelf in the Bibliothèque Nationale. These butterflies would be none other than myself. Me: twenty-five volumes, eighteen thousand pages of text and three hundred illustrations, including a portrait of the author. My bones are leather and cardboard, my parchment flesh smells of glue and mildew, and I strut at my ease across a hundredweight or so of paper. I am reborn, I have at last become a complete man, thinking, speaking, singing, thundering, and asserting himself with the peremptory inertia of matter. I am taken up, opened out, spread on the table, smoothed with the flat of the hand and sometimes made to crack. I let it happen and then suddenly I flash, dazzle, impose myself from a distance; my powers traverse space and time, strike down the wicked and protect the good. No one can forget me or pass me over in silence: I am a large, manageable, and terrible fetish. (122)

In such vivid descriptions, Sartre narrates the powerful attraction of the book to writers while also providing an insight into the symbolic power of the book as a means of inserting one's voice into the store of human culture—or as life writing scholars commonly put it, "on the record." But as Sartre's fantasy of transformation details, it is the combination of the material affordances of the book and paper (the codex), the institutions charged with storing them (in Sartre's case the Bibliothèque Nationale), and the interaction with the reader that the material presence of the book enables (reading) that, taken together, form "the record" to which life writing contributes. Rereading Sartre's texts

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through the lens of book and media history reveals how, in Gitelman's words, "written genres in general are familiarly treated as if they were equal to or coextensive with the sort of textual artifacts that habitually embody them" (Paper 3). *The Words* is commonly interpreted through the lens of the linguistic turn: Paul John Eakin, for example, reads the text as a narrative of Sartre's becoming *to* narrative. "There is much to learn from Sartre's brilliant diagnosis of the child's literary disease," Eakin argues, regarding "the fundamental uncertainty about the relation between autobiographical narrative and the life it claims to record" (129–30). In a psychoanalytic reading, Anne-Marie Picard argues that through *The Words* Sartre examines "the function of the symbolic in the life of a human subject" and by doing so "Sartre helps us understand Freud" (78). For Picard the many books and the many types of print culture that populate Sartre's autobiography represent a Totem, and a single Book, which confirm that the fatherless Sartre "*had no choice but to* 'choose writing as a symptom' in order to survive" (85, emphasis in original). In a virtuosic analysis, Philippe Lejeune contends that *The Words* is a *dialectic* rather than a *narrative* that depicts Sartre's experience of bad faith. This article asks, what happens to our reading of *The Words* if we start from a position that assumes that Sartre was not writing metaphorically about books to talk about narrative, but writing about the book as an object and a symbol?

THE BOOK'S MATERIAL HISTORY

On the one hand, it is not the book but the more fundamental act of writing that underpins "the record" as it is commonly understood in life writing studies. But it is the codex—the means of binding sheets together in square or rectangular volumes—that made new ways of collecting, preserving, organizing, and reading written material possible (Pettegree 4–5). As Andrew Pettegree explains:

> A codex allows for different sorts of reading. Where a scroll is intended for consecutive reading, a codex can be browsed. As the reader can move from one part of the text to another in a manner of their own devising, forwards or backwards, this encourages reflective thought. A codex provides not merely a narrative but a research resource. (5)[3]

For Sartre's bookish fantasy, the body of the codex is vital: "I am taken up, ripped out, spread on the table, smoothed with the flat of the hand and sometimes made to crack" (Sartre 122). The codex is the material condition of accessibility and of contact between the author and reader that is agentic and embodied. In depicting his early experiences in his grandfather's library,

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before he could read, Sartre emphasizes Pettegree's point regarding the mode of reading made possible by the codex:

> each day I was present at ceremonies whose meaning escaped me: my grandfather—so clumsy, normally, that my grandmother buttoned his gloves for him—handled these cultural objects with the dexterity of an officiating priest. Hundreds of times I saw him get up absent-mindedly, walk round the table, cross the room in two strides, unhesitatingly pick out a volume without allowing himself time for choice, run through it as he went back to his armchair, with a combined movement of his thumb and right forefinger, and, almost before he sat down, open it with a flick 'at the right page', making it creak like a shoe. (28)

It is the affordances offered by the materiality of the codex that links the manuscript and print eras, and it is the codex that, in many ways, marks the start of the history of this new way of reading (Crain). Beginning in late antiquity, the era of the manuscript codex saw the formation and development of a range of institutions, discourses, and practices that utilized the new medium. In Europe, the monastic tradition of producing copies of sacred texts, the transformation of cathedral schools into universities in the thirteenth century, and the rise of humanist scholarship toward the end of the fourteenth century all made use of and created demand for the codex (Pettegree 5-11). The fate of Aztec codices when the Spanish invaded Mexico in the sixteenth century dramatically illustrates the association of the codex with "the record": they were destroyed by Aztec kings who sought to rewrite history and by the Spaniards whose aim was to annihilate Aztec culture and religion in the process of colonization (Boone).[4] In Europe, the collection and organization of books was a primary activity of institutions and wealthy collectors. Individual copies of texts produced by scribes were collected and organized. Thus, in the manuscript codex era, "the record" was the act of transcription that kept specific knowledge and texts recorded and available, and at the same time it was the collection of these texts in institutions where they could be accessed by a small number of literate people from across Europe (Müller).

With the invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century, however, the small scale and personalized production, distribution, and accessing of books in Europe was destabilized. The codex underwent a change in identity as it moved from the manuscript era—when scribes commissioned and produced individual texts, and when scholars spent much of their time traveling and negotiating access to books that others owned—to a mass-produced object that printers and binders made. It is this mass-produced object that we, today, recognize as "the book." It took readers, the public, and all those involved in the production of books many decades in the sixteenth century to make sense of this change from manuscript to print, and its outcomes were in no way

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guaranteed (see Pettegree). Jan-Dirk Müller argues that during this transition the idea of a tradition, a record, to which individual books contribute emerges as being embodied in the longevity offered "by the numerous institutions that select the constantly growing reservoir of writings" (150). The codex in combination with print heightens the need, in Müller's account, for publicly accountable repositories of books. The complex negotiations, arguments, innovations, and experiments that characterize the long transition from manuscript to print make for a fascinating story, at least as told by book historians such as Müller, Pettegree, and Johns. In what follows I trace a line through the histories of the printed book to demonstrate how self-representation and autobiography by those involved in the production and distribution of books were important paratexts and epitexts in the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining the book as medium for making knowledge and literature visible and consequential. This admittedly partial view recontextualizes the claims made in contemporary life writing scholarship that publishing life narrative puts marginalized voices "on the record" by demonstrating that "the record" is two things.[5] Firstly, it is a symbol shaped by a long history of discussion and meaning-making *around* the book, one in which self-representation itself has played an important role. Secondly, the symbol of the book has its foundations in processes of mediation and materiality.

But this very broad material history of the book—from scroll to manuscript codex to print codex—I have just offered must be further complicated by considering the role of readers in the idea of "the record" because, as Hayles argues, "materiality depends on how the work mobilizes its resources as a physical artifact as well as on the user's interactions with the work and the interpretative strategies she develops. . . . In the broadest sense, materiality emerges from the dynamic interplay between the richness of the physically robust world and human intelligence as it crafts this physicality to create meanings" (33). The material record is taken up and handled by embodied readers. This embodied, material handling is erased when we idealize the Book (Litvak) but is also a mundane reality that troubles the transcendental power associated with writing and, for Sartre, publishing.[6]

"I HAVE MADE MYSELF A PROSPECTIVE INTEREST FOR MILLIONS OF GLANCES": THE FANTASY OF TEXTUAL FIXITY AND THE PROBLEM OF TOO MANY READERS

A key feature of the "physically robust world" of the book is often assumed to be textual fixity. Yet it is often repeated in book history scholarship that the material history of the book challenges the prevailing contemporary view that the book is defined by textual fixity and permanence. As Adrian Johns argues:

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> We may consider fixity not as an *inherent* quality [of the book], but as a *transitive* one. That is, it may be more useful to reverse our common sense assumption. We may adopt the principle that fixity exists only inasmuch as it is recognized and acted upon by people—and not otherwise. The consequence of this change in perspective is that print culture itself is immediately laid open to analysis. It becomes a *result* of manifold representations, practices and conflicts, rather than just the monolithic *cause* with which we are often presented. (20–21, emphasis in original)

Our understanding of the book and the collection of books as constituting the fixity and stability of "the record" of human knowledge and culture is partly shaped by the material conditions of the book itself, and paper as a stable and durable object (Gitleman, *Paper* 3–4). As many book historians have shown, this idealization of the book and the record *requires* forgetting that not all books have long lives; popular books, school texts, salacious literature, and banned political tracts were read to death, hidden, or recycled (Gitelman, "Print Culture"; Price). A long and complicated history of editioning and piracy also challenges this modern fantasy (Johns), as does the Romantic practice of writers themselves releasing multiple versions of a single text almost simultaneously (Piper, *Dreaming*) and the Victorian practice of serialization. Over and over again, the book historians remind us that the long history of activities that predate the practices of publishing we are familiar with are a part of a history of the book that modern bookish subjects often willfully forget or gloss over.

Book history and reader research also consistently argues that an investment in the symbolic ideal of the stable textual record relies not just on forgetting the history of the book, but also forgetting the history of debates about what reading is. The necessarily broad material history I provided above is complicated by the anxieties sparked by the mass production of books and increased literacy in the middle and working classes. With the rise of the mass-produced book and increased literacy, the literate elite faced the "problem . . . that literacy was spreading too widely to remain a reliable marker of rank and gender" (Price 2). The accessibility and proliferation of texts that came about with mass printing made palpable the tensions between, on the one hand, the symbolic ideal of a "record" made up of stable texts thought to be of importance and accessed by specific groups (the institution and the collection), and on the other, the possibility of reaching unprecedented numbers of readers ("the masses"). While the scholarly and intellectual community had long embraced the expanded circulation of ideas made possible by the book's affordances, some were also wary of the problem raised by an increase in the number of readers whom they judged not to be morally or intellectually capable of encountering these important texts in the right way. The proliferation of "low" genres in the early centuries of the print codex—memoirs of socially

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criminalized figures such as prostitutes chief among them—also put pressure on its symbolic investment in the book. These popular texts were often so well used or recycled after use, that few of them remain.[7] Thus book history is as much a story of lost texts and speculations about readers as it is the formation and consolidation of the written record of human activities.

This tense interplay between mass reading and mass printing shapes the symbolic function of the book, as we shall see below when we consider Rousseau's investment in the book market as a medium for a particular kind of mediated interaction with his reader. This interplay also defines the bookish genres of autobiography and memoir that literary scholars long dismissed as popular, except when these forms are taken up by writers whose aesthetic merit has already been established in the form of novels, poems, or plays, including Rousseau, Wordsworth, Sartre, and Goethe (Rak, "Are Memoirs Autobiography?"). Early criticism on autobiography worked tirelessly to address this issue. But how a text goes on "the record" is not as clear a process as these critics implied. When a given piece of writing is printed in book form, it has the *potential* to be read by tens or hundreds of thousands of people, *and/or* preserved in institutions and made accessible to particular kinds of subjects who are interested in the store of human knowledge. An investment in writing as a means of putting experience and knowledge "on the record," by definition, involves an investment in the codex and paper's potential to exceed the individual writer's life span. Thus the popular book is doomed to invisibility in this long view of human activity, its collection being sporadic due to the low status of its content. This raises the question: can we disarticulate the material affordances of the book from its symbolic power?

"I AM A LARGE, MANAGEABLE, AND TERRIBLE FETISH": THE BINDING OF THE MATERIAL AND THE SYMBOLIC

Leading historian of the book, Leah Price, wrestles with this slippery movement between material and symbol early in *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain*:

> You'll have noticed my contortions in attempting to distinguish "text"—a string of words—from "book" or "book-object": a physical thing. In an everyday language incapable of even deciding what preposition should link the two—the text "of" a book, the text "in" a book?—one term appears sometimes as contained within the other, sometimes as antithetical to it. If "book" really connoted materiality, there would be no need to affix the pleonastic "object"; if "text" really provided an adequate term for a linguistic structure, I would refer to what you're now reading as "this text." Only the ambiguity of sentence openings prevented me from generalizing the distinction between the Bible (a text) and the bible (an object) to Books and books. (4)

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The contortions of Price's text—its dashes and brackets, question marks, and parentheses—perform on the page the difficulty of untying the book from its contents, the rich symbolic form of the book from its material particulars. Price wriggles out of these knots, or at least loosens them so she can move more freely, by observing that reading (at its best) has long been viewed as an act of transcending material conditions: that a "good" text will transport the reader away from the binding and pages into the life of the mind and imagination (5–7, 31–33). Price takes a different tack in her investigation, focusing instead on what she calls "nonreading," those instances where "The book's material properties trump its textual content" and its "value lies in attributes orthogonal to its legibility" (8). Price's project decentralizes reading in favor of handling.[8]

But what if we stay with the knots that make it difficult to distinguish books from Books (objects and texts)? Such an approach might maintain Price's well-articulated suspicion of the slippage between matter and content but refrain from a belief in the possibility of their disarticulation. We might instead consider how books have functioned in the late twentieth century as "happy objects" (Ahmed) in our bookish culture, particularly for humanists. Such an approach would be attentive to how subjects in a bookish culture are oriented toward books *because* they have come to represent certain things that Sartre describes so vividly—connection to "the record" of human experience, a particular relationship with readers and with time, associations with the practice of reading, the circulation of knowledge, spiritual and personal development, and pleasure (see Piper, *Book Was There*; Crain). To be oriented toward something is to be predisposed to it: "certain objects are attributed as the cause of happiness, which means they already circulate as social goods before we 'happen' upon them" (Ahmed 28). From this perspective, disentangling the slippage between books and Books may become a lesser priority than considering our orientation toward the book as a privileged and privileging form. What is its history? How did we get here? How has this orientation toward the book shaped the way we make knowledge, what forms it can take, and how knowledge can be made consequential? These are big questions. Looking over the history of the book and following the thread of autobiographical discourse allows us to scale such questions to a more manageable size by asking how it is that the book has come figuratively and materially to shape the ways we think about the act of self-representation: what it is, what it does, and how and why it might matter. Thinking with Ahmed and with theorists of materialism, we might also approach the matter of fact of our orientation toward the book and its "naturalization" as a matter of concern, not just because of the rise of the digital era, but precisely *because* the book

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reached a level of ideological invisibility in the twentieth century.[10] The publishing of books evolved to become a highly organized, privileged, and profitable system of knowledge distribution and validation that by the turn of the twentieth century was largely a given. However we might feel about books (or bookish subjects, or not), the book is the result of processes undertaken over many centuries of disciplining matter to make it trustworthy and profitable (Johns). This history of governing the book to shore up its profitability began almost as soon as printing became possible, and often centered around questions of propriety.

This capitalist investment in the book has always sat uneasily alongside the cultural and epistemological investment in the symbolism of the book. As many book historians have shown, writers were often at odds with the craftsmen printers and the capitalist booksellers in discussions regarding the book's meaning and purpose (Woodmansee, Johns, Turnovsky). Literary critics, too, have long struggled with the problem of the common materiality of Literature and "other" forms of writing (such as memoir, genre fiction, long-form journalism, and comics, not to mention telephone books, instruction manuals, and pornography). We might consider the extensive work of building canons, creating and defending aesthetic criteria, and delimiting genres of writing as defensive mechanisms against the problem posed by this shared materiality, the fact that a book could "be" so many things other than Literature.

Two examples from different moments in the history of the book in Europe provide us the opportunity to consider the book in life writing studies by exploring the history of our orientation toward the book. I read these histories alongside Sartre's autobiography, a prime example of the mid-twentieth-century bookish subject. The orientation toward the book documented in the two historical moments I explore here is surprisingly circular: the book needed life narrative and self-representation to help secure its place in culture and the making of knowledge during its early period, just as autobiographical writing needed the book to enter culture as a form of knowledge. This circularity reveals why the very practice of life writing might be assumed to be bookish and explains why recent writing about the book often turns to autobiography.[11] It also demonstrates how materiality and mediation, life, and the process of reflecting on living are mutually constituted.[12]

My first example examines the history of the book prior to the author's rise in prominence in the book market, when books in England were seen to be the product of Stationers rather than the people who wrote them.[13] The second example comes from the Romantic period in Europe, when authors were gaining importance both symbolically and in their claims to the books that bore their names. In this period, autobiographical writing and the print

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genre of the collected edition influenced a turn away from the craftsmen and businessmen of the book trade as guarantors of a book's veracity and value toward the "amplification of the authorial persona" (Piper, *Dreaming* 30) and the view that the printed book "was capable of functioning as a timeless and unchanging object" that contained and preserved literary history (20). Taken together, these two moments from book history can initiate a critical understanding of Sartre's recognition of the book as a "large, manageable and terrible fetish."

FORGING TRUST: THE BOOK'S DOMESTIC TIES BEFORE THE RISE OF THE AUTHOR

In his important work of book history, Johns historicizes the current association of print with textual fixity and stability along with the book's status as a trustworthy medium for the recording and dissemination of knowledge. He examines how the epistemological practice of natural philosophy intersected with the production and circulation of print to try to forge a reputation for print as a trustworthy medium for the distribution of new knowledge. Johns's emphasis is on the fragile association between publishing and reputation, and the constant work required by a range of actors within English publishing to sustain and strengthen the association. Central to his account of this process is the examination of practices that resulted in "the merging of trust in people with trust in things" (37). Yet this merging in the early modern period was never complete: any given edition of a book lived under threat of the accusation of piracy, an accusation that could discredit the knowledge presented and impact the reputation of the people involved in its production. "Like print itself," Johns argues, "piracy therefore had *epistemic* as well as *economic* implications: it affected the structure and content of knowledge" by deauthorizing a writer's work and their claims (33, emphasis in original).

To combat the charge of unauthorized productions of texts and the resulting deauthorization of both print and new claims to knowledge, the key players in English publishing developed a range of strategies and practices to shore up the reputation of printing and the selling of books. These included the institutional formations in the form of the Stationers' Company, a powerful trade body that "created a cultural régime capable of disciplining the domains of print" (Johns 188) through practices such as retaining records of which printers owned the licenses to print specific texts and policing the propriety of the print and book shops.[14] A complex code of civility was central to the work the Stationers' Company undertook, and this code included forging a reputation of reliability and respectability for print by encouraging an association among the civility and propriety of its producers, the printers

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booksellers (187–90). Yet this self-governance could be interfered with by political figures and the monarchy through the granting of privileges and patents, insofar as chosen individuals could be elevated or bypass the workings of the company (249–62). The attempts to formalize and govern the book were constantly under threat from the exercise of executive power.

A finding in Johns's work that has significance for autobiography studies is that a "central tactic" in assessing a book's reliability "was that of attributing trust to a book on the basis of an evaluation of a person" (36). In analyzing this practice, Johns presents some history of the primary concern of autobiographical scholarship in the twentieth century: "how readers decided *what* to believe" (Johns 31, emphasis in original). In doing so he provides a *material* history of what, in life writing studies, has often been understood as a textual process, one where a reader encounters the autobiographical subject in a dematerialized textual space. An early and famous structural formulation of this relation, Lejeune's "autobiographical pact" considered the textual features that mark out autobiography as a genre of nonfiction and self-life-writing. While often misinterpreted as a contract, Lejeune's formulation highlights the importance of paratextual materials for guiding readers' approach to a book and sealing the referential relationship between the author, narrator, and protagonist.[15] In the cultural history outlined by Johns, trust is forged through an association between a book and its place of production shaped by discourses of domesticity and family. This cultivation of trust provides an interesting standpoint from which to revisit the extent to which early theories of autobiography assumed the protocols of publishing as the material ground for the "pact" between reader and author. In the early modern period, it is the dynamic space of the home and business of the Stationers that secures the book's trustworthiness.

> In effect, argument over the circumstances in which a book was made and displayed came to constitute claims of its potential for seditious, blasphemous, or obscene meaning—or on the other hand, for its positive worth. Whether a book contained safe, reliable knowledge could be questioned by asking whether it had been produced in conditions of propriety, or affirmed by asserting that it had. (Johns 127–28)

In the seventeenth century, the word "private" evoked "illicit, secret, or seditious" (128) and printing that occurred in non-domestic spaces was referred to as coming from "holes" (128). For those seeking to secure the reputation of the Book and govern the production and circulation of books, "Truth was made at home; lies emerged from holes" (129).

Thus judgments about a particular Stationer's character—how he ran his family home and his printing house—were central to whether the books and

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other printed matter he produced could be trusted.[16] This practice of forming a judgment regarding someone's professional conduct using an assessment of their personal life is familiar to us in the contemporary moment. We, too, live in an era when a powerful capitalist like Mark Zuckerberg insists that—to grow their markets—"privacy must be overcome" (Zimmer), and Google must be told by the European Union that individuals have a right to be forgotten. Assessments of personal conduct routinely undermine claims to authority by politicians, authors, and other public figures. Like contemporary readers of online texts, when early modern readers were making assessments of individual printed texts, "Their worries about literary credit were often resolved, as a matter of everyday practice, into assessments of the people involved in the making, distribution and reception of books" (Johns 31–32). This adjudication was not a matter of making assessments of authors, but of the printers, booksellers, and other tradesmen involved in the *production* of books.

This complex history of the intersection between material processes, locations, and discourses that informs both the governing of the book and individual reader's evaluation of the veracity of texts provides life writing studies with a thicker definition of what we are referring to when we say that life writing puts voices "on the record." Trust in autobiographical texts is commonly understood as being established by the success with which an author *produces* a trustworthy text through linguistic and rhetorical strategies (Bruss 1–23). Johns's history of the book in early modern England shows us that rhetorical strategies such as appeals to the moral authority of the patriarchal family and the moral control exerted in the household were embedded in material practices—such as the layout of bookshops, the visibility of print materials in the streets, and the co-location of domestic and commercial space—to establish the cultural dominance of the book. As Julie Rak, Gillian Whitlock, and Kate Douglas have shown, this complex intersection of discourses of value and propriety and the material practices of publishing continue to influence the reception of life writing when it is published in book form. Book covers and the layout of bookstores are fundamental to the social and political work undertaken by published life writing in the cases of memoirs of childhood (Douglas), memoirs from and about the Middle East (Whitlock), and in the popularity of memoir in the American book market in 2003 (Rak, *Boom!*).

Once the reliability of the printed book had been largely secured in the early modern period, the attention of those involved in the production of books turned to its profitability and to how the book could instantiate new kinds of social, intellectual, and spiritual interactions between writers and readers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one author who was particularly interested in this question was autobiographer, novelist, and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

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SOMEWHERE, OUT THERE: ROUSSEAU'S IMAGINING OF THE BOOK MARKET

As the seventeenth-century book was understood in terms of its located-ness within existing and emerging sites of the professional and the personal, by the late eighteenth century the book was well entrenched in cultures of knowledge and as a transnational commodity. Once the function and reliability of the book had been largely secured, the question of authorship and the more vexed question of how the profits of the book trade should be shared became an issue. What also emerged in this period was a new investment in what the Book was capable of. As Piper argues, this investment involved writers' increasing awareness of and engagement with the "bibliocosmos" both in the content of their writing and in how they understood what it meant to write for publication. In his study of Rousseau's writing about publishing (which appeared mostly in the life writing form of letters), Turnovsky argues that at this moment in the history of the book in Europe,

> the literary market represented an imagined space, which not only gave shape to but was also given shape by the evolving expectations of writers, as these were affected not so much by commercial publishing *per se*, but by the slow decline of a traditional patronage system that nonetheless continued to dominate their pre-occupations, attitudes, and behavior. (388)

As I discuss further below, Sartre inherited this idealized understanding of the commercial space into which writing, via the medium of the printed codex, was released. This idealized space forms part of "the record" to which contemporary scholars refer when they theorize the importance of life writing. Turnovsky argues that the book market itself became a symbol that writers such as Rousseau thought of in particular ways and attached ideas to. These imaginings *shaped* how the book market developed, particularly in regard to the question of how authors began claiming a share in the profits that the circulation of books produced as commodities to, in Rousseau's case, establish themselves as financially independent from the social elite. In Turnovsky's account, Rousseau's imagining of the book market stems partly from his dissatisfaction with the social requirements of an homme de lettres who relies on good social standing with the social elite to secure pensions on which to live. Turnovsky tells the story of Rousseau's orientation toward the Book as an investment in its potential to travel into the hands of his idealized reader.[18] Rousseau was less interested in—and ambivalent about—the fact that the mechanism of travel is the market, and thus the process of travel involves the logic of profit and loss. The book and its mode of circulation became an object associated with the authentic expression he was formulating *as a* good, and which would influence the Romantic period. When Rousseau left Paris in the

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mid-1750s, he did so partly out of disgust with the social demands on successful hommes de lettres that they be witty and erudite entertainers of the social elite. An isolated life in the country allowed Rousseau to concentrate on his writing and to develop his commitment to "a new kind of cultural ethic based on sincerity and passion, rather than elegance and wit" (Turnovsky 394). For Turnovsky, Rousseau wanted to be free of the requirement of being socially acceptable *to* and socially accepted *by* the elite, which meant shifting the meaning of a writer's identity from its association with the embodied social sphere of the Paris salon to the object of the circulating book. For Rousseau this meant developing a view of the Book as a site of privileged communicative potential for an author's writing (work), a view of the book as a prosthetic:

> The work became the privileged site in which to elaborate, represent, and appreciate an authorial persona, precisely because the work offered a line of communication with a putative interlocutor that potentially escaped regulation by the norms governing and instrumentalizing relations in salons and at court. In turn, by transforming works into circulating books that could in practice reach a reader, the commercial publishing sector laid out the real-life conditions in which such a communication might take place. Perceived as such by the writer, it was engaged as much more than either an income-generating system in the absence of more respectable sources of revenue or a network that efficiently diffused ideas and concepts. For the book trade was now also conceptualized as a cultural field into which the writer entered with the specific hope and expectation of constructing a public image as a preeminent cultural figure, considered now as an embodiment of virtue, autonomy, and disinterest. (Turnovsky 396)

Rousseau's investments in the book remain influential in literary criticism and in how the book is understood. His preference to find ways to avoid being a charming guest in the salons of Paris, and his impatience at the prospect of the imagined payoff of the intimate contact with his reader that the release of his books on the market promised, make Rousseau an early and influential example of a bookish authorial subject whose moral and affective investments form part of the history of the book as a happy object in the contemporary moment. Sartre inherited this idealization of the book as a happy object. In *The Words* he continues his rhapsodic account of becoming-book, quoted at the beginning of this article, by imagining his material dispersion:

> My consciousness is in fragments: all the better. Other consciousnesses have taken charge of me. They read *me* and I leap into their eyes; they talk about *me* and I am on everyone's lips, a universal and singular language; I have made myself a prospective interest for millions of glances. For anyone who knows how to like me, I am his most intimate disquiet: but if he wants to touch me, I draw aside and vanish: I exist nowhere but I *am*, at last! I am everywhere: a parasite on humanity, by my good deeds I prey on it and force it endlessly to revive my absence. (Sartre 122, emphasis in original)

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Rousseau's and Sartre's belief in the everywhereness of the book has been developed by book historian Andrew Piper as the "bibliocosmos." He traces the history of this idea to the Romantic period in his study *Dreaming in Books: The Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age*. Piper focuses on nineteenth-century Europe as a key moment in "our" development as bibliographic subjects." He argues that while the book is often thought of as a discrete unit whose

> boundedness and typographical regularity became the perfect embodiments of the temporal continuity and spatial autonomy on which both the modern subject (as *individuum*) and the political form of the nation were to be founded. . . . Romantic books and romantic literature . . . foregrounded the relational structure of books, that there was a bibliographic elsewhere, before, and after which with books and their texts were increasingly engaged. (14)

The circulation of books in the transnational book trade, the translation of literary works, the production of miscellanies, multiple editions, and collected works, were all hallmarks of the book trade that became a preoccupation in Romantic print culture and literature. A conscious engagement by writers and publishers with the "bibliographic horizon" (14) or Romantic "bibliocosmos" (5) was a vital part of "the naturalization of the book in the nineteenth century" (13) that Piper argues we have inherited. Piper's formulation reminds us we have become oriented toward the book not just because the codex is easy for the individual reader to organize and travel with, or because it makes possible new ways to store and access information, in turn fostering new ways of reading, but also because the book itself *travels*: its radical potential for movement is a matter of concern (to use Latour's term) to the Romantics and a matter of fact in the twentieth century, when Sartre is writing.

"THREE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS, INCLUDING A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR": THE WORK, THE LIFE, AND THE BOOK IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

Rousseau's pre-Romantic idealization of the book market as offering a zone of contact between the authorial persona and readers that was less constrained by the norms of elite society and more open to possibility continued to develop in the nineteenth century. One example of how this idealization occurred powerfully demonstrates the history of the association between an individual's life, their work, and the materiality of the book: the bookish genre of the collected edition. Piper argues that while the collected edition was a recognized publishing genre prior to the Romantic period, it "came to play an increasingly prominent role in the organization of literature as a category in the nineteenth century" (55). The collected edition in the Romantic

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period deployed the spatial unity offered by the book to create a "tempo continuity" by reproducing and organizing an author's existing works (Thus, while it was an important material tool for the creation of a literar canon, it was also a technique for organizing and responding to the enor mous proliferation of genres and modes of publishing that defined the era The collected edition "served an essential function in the monumentalizatio of literature in the nineteenth century" (54) through the production of large identical books that acted as single containers for the diverse genres of writing that comprise an author's body of work. Despite the emphasis placed on the instability and inconsistency of hand-printed text in recent accounts of book history, Piper argues, "what mattered to the collected edition's rise in cultural prominence during the early nineteenth century was precisely the *imagination* possibility that something stayed the same" (56, emphasis in original). Moreover, this imaginative investment in the Book's ability to stabilize an author's work "was not seen as either illicit or creatively impoverished but juridically and aesthetically legitimate" (56).

Piper's analysis of how the collected edition contributed to the evidentiary and aesthetic legitimacy of the book is a vital part of the shared history of life writing and the book because it furthers our understanding of the institution of the book as a happy object in the study of life writing, and the deep and complex relationship between "the life" and the book. The Romantic collected edition was a key point in the merging of ideas regarding the material aspects of the book with cultural (re)investments in the power of the Book. The Romantics' use of the collected edition provides a compelling example of how the materiality of the book is given meaning and value through its association with autobiographical discourse. While the early modern book was anchored to social and cultural norms through its association with the lives of Stationers and their adherence to existing discourses and practices of propriety, craft, and the family, by the turn of the nineteenth century the discourse of individuality that was so important to Rousseau was reshaping cultural investments in the book.[20] The material properties of the book—binding, organization, its ability to act as a container—allowed the bookish genre of the collected edition to act as an argument "for a fundamental homogeneity of its content through the overwhelming promotion of the author as the single organizing figure behind the collection" (Piper, *Dreaming* 54).[21] Providing a material container for a given author's entire written output and thus making a material body for their body of work, the print genre of the collected edition deployed two forms of life writing as framing techniques that consolidated the association between the life, the work, and the book: the author portrait and the biographical sketch.[22] In this sense, "In reading the collected edition one experienced a persistent encounter with a person" (59).

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The inclusion of a portrait of the author in a collected edition became a standard practice at this time and is an important bibliographic legacy of Romanticism. Evidencing the increased importance of the figure of the author as representative of cultural tradition, the author portrait was used for cultural and political ends and forged the "autobiographization of literature" (59), which would be destabilized by literary critics of the mid-twentieth century. The visual representation of the author's face as a technique for "orienting the reader's relationship to the increasingly dispersed and mediated self of bibliographic culture" (59) was accompanied by a second technique for linking the life and the work to the book, the biographical sketch. "The author's self-portrait became the discursive frame to complement the visual frame of the face that shaped the reception of the author's works" (60). While a biographical sketch would open the edition, a large variety of life writing genres also began to be included in the collected editions to strengthen the link between the private life of the author and their texts, and to satisfy the market demand for the edition to include some piece of previously unseen writing by the author. In response to this trend, the presentation of the collected editions of Rousseau were reorganized, with the placement of the *Confessions* at the front of the collection instead of the *Discourses* (60). Where published autobiographical writings were not available, letters, diaries, and notes were included as well as a biographical sketch.

At the same time as this collection and organization of material was becoming common, Piper notes, the materiality of collected editions reached a surprising level of standardization. The material characteristics of the genre included almost identical title pages as well as the more mundane standardization that was achieved by having works previously printed in a range of publications set in the same typeface on the same paper stock and bound together. For Sartre, the standardized materiality of the mass-produced book is constitutive of the book's potential as a device for time travel. It is the possibility of the book's body outliving the author's body that invites the fantasy of the book as a prosthesis for the life and the work. While Sartre condemns his investment in Literature and belief in his destiny as a writer, he maintains, at the time of writing *The Words*, an inability to believe in his own mortality. The "conjuring-trick" of imagining his transformation into a book "succeeded":

> I buried death in the shroud of glory. I thought only of the glory, never of death, without reflecting that the two were one. Now, as I write these lines, I know that I have had my time to within a few years. Now, I can picture to myself clearly, but not too cheerfully, the approach of age and my future decline, the decline and death of those I love; but my own death, never. I sometimes hint to those around me—some of whom are fifteen, twenty, even thirty years younger than I am—how sorry I shall be to outlive them: they make fun of me and I laugh with them, but nothing will happen: when I was nine, an operation removed my capacity for feeling that sense of the pathetic thought proper to our condition. (122–23)

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This moment of reflection presented from the moment of writing appears directly after the extended celebration of the boy's transformation into a book that opened this article and provides further evidence of the power of the Book as a symbolic and material substrate for life writing. Do we condemn Sartre as unable to detach from this last shred of bad faith? What might Sartre's belief in the book tell us about the book as a happy object in autobiography practice and criticism?

BECOMING BOOK: THE PERFORMATIVE POWER OF MATERIALITY

In Eakin's interpretation, Sartre's evocative description of becoming a book is representative of "the elusiveness of self-knowledge experienced by any practicing autobiographer" (151). Eakin's analysis of Sartre's text is emblematic of the preoccupations of autobiography criticism: the autobiographer's struggle to understand the gap between narrative and experience, self and language, and the literary techniques they use to represent this struggle. Eakin interprets the descriptions of the effects of publishing, the physicality of the book, the role of the author, and the book as a medium of time travel presented in *The Words* as *metaphors* for writing and constructing narrative. Such an approach reads Sartre's powerful evocation of his transfiguration from boy to book as metaphor and downplays the role of the bibliocosmos in enabling and organizing Sartre's autobiographical project. The bodily transformation Sartre describes is powerful not only because it paints the surreal image of the bookish-boy, but also because Sartre's fantasy is enacted by every reader who encounters an edition of *The Words*. Sartre invests the author function not just with the power of a classificatory function in discourse—as Foucault articulates—but also with a *material* existence that has enormous potential. This material existence is the result of the unique performative power of the book's materiality and is the foundation of "the record" so commonly evoked in life writing criticism. In imagining and staging the scenario of becoming bookish, Sartre becomes not an identity constituted by narrative but rather "twenty-five volumes, eighteen thousand pages of text and three hundred illustrations, including a portrait" of the author's previous physical incarnation as a man. In becoming book, Sartre becomes a "large, manageable, and terrible fetish" for the bookish subjects who are his readers, and in the bibliocosmos he participates in by being placed "on a shelf in the Bibliothèque Nationale." He also achieves the status of radical mediated potentiality that he forecludes him as a boy whose life appears to have no purpose beyond receiving praise from his mother and grandparents.[23]

Sartre's description of the book as dynamic and flexible, yet inert, articulates an understanding of and belief in the enormous potential the book offers in the mid-twentieth century. As literary criticism's forgetfulness regarding the

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...ook advanced, Sartre was preparing for publication a testament to how the ...aterial properties and potential of the book and its attendant institutions ...ould shape self-perception and the autobiographical project.[24] The passage ...scribing Sartre's fantasy of transforming into a book articulates a number ...the fundamental and highly valued characteristics of the book as a happy ...ject of the mid-twentieth century. This fantasy involves a passionate invest...ent in the physical interaction between the body of the reader and the book. ...ce he becomes a book, Sartre begins to work on the bodies of his readers. ...e can "leap into the eyes" and then onto "the lips" of those who read him, ...courts "millions of glances" through the processes of mass production and ...tribution in the book market and collection in libraries. The passage plays ...the slippage between the physical properties of the book and the mental ...tivity of reading that was so important to Rousseau. While grasped and flat...ned, Sartre-as-book is also elusive: "I exist nowhere but I *am*." To become a ...ok is to achieve an everywhereness by gaining circulation and permanence, ...be integrated into the consciousness of readers, while remaining fugitive ...rough distribution across multiple volumes. In *The Words* Sartre's life and ...nsciousness have meaning because they are mediated, and it is the specific ...teriality of the printed book—rather than just linguistic representation, as ...e title suggests—that evokes the autobiographical act. It is a mediated per...rmance that exploits the material properties of the book that gives Sartre ...e. Our understanding of the power of the book to give life and of the im...portance of "the record" becomes sharper when the intertwined histories of ...e book and life writing are acknowledged.

NOTES

1. See James Olney's characterization of his interest in autobiography as being "focused in one direction on the relation traceable between lived experience and its *written record* and in the other direction on what that written experience offers to us as readers and as human beings" (x–xi, emphasis added), Leigh Gilmore's argument that "The recurring mark in the women's autobiographies I study is that a *written record*, a testimonial, or a confessional document can represent a person, can stand in her absence for her truth, can re-member her life. Indeed, even in the narrowest and most ambivalent sense, writing an autobiography can be a political act because it asserts a right to speak rather than to be spoken for (40, emphasis added), and G. Thomas Couser's discussion of the role of memoir in democracy where he comments that memoir "often puts *on the record* lives that would otherwise be transient, evanescent" (181, emphasis added).
2. See Hayles (31–32), Littau (10–12), and Price (31–33).
3. This characterization of the reading made possible by the codex can be compared with William A. Johnson's discussion of the reading practices associated with bookrolls.
4. Yet because there was also an interest in sending manuscript codices produced by Aztec and Mixtec peoples back to Europe to be collected and studied, the practice of making codices continued into the period of colonization.

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5. It is not possible here to do justice to the complex arguments and the variety of opinions on how best to conceptualize the changes inaugurated by the shifts from bookroll to codex, from manuscript to print, from small-scale to mass production, and the concomitant rise of literacy and changing cultural and political investments in the codex and in reading. There is clearly a need for more scholarship in the field of autobiography studies that considers how the debates regarding these issues in book and media history might shape our work on autobiography. Indeed, Gitleman argues against sweeping analysis of media history, arguing that it is "Better, indeed, to admit that no medium has a single, particular logic, while every genre does and is" (*Paper* 9). My approach in this article is to think about what this more precise approach might look like in the case of autobiography studies by reading the mid-twentieth century against two earlier uses of autobiography as a genre.
6. The line of inquiry I am tracing here, between the symbolic power of the book and its material affordances, builds on Derrida's analysis of "good" and "bad" writing as structures of logocentrism and his desconstruction of the division between signifier and signified. "The idea of the book," for Derrida, sits on the side of "good" writing, that presupposes a "totally constituted signified"—a divine or Natural presence—that authorizes it (Derrida 17–18). He writes: "The idea of the book is the idea of a totality, finite or infinite, of the signifier; this totality of the signifier cannot be a totality, unless a totality constituted by the signified preexists it, supervises its inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality. The idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality, is profoundly alien to the sense of writing. It is the encyclopedic protection of theology and of logocentrism against the disruption of writing, against its aphoristic energy, and . . . against difference in general" (Derrida 18).
7. See Price's work for a history of the recycling of books, Spedding's attempts to evidence readership of the popular writer Eliza Haywood (1693–1756), and Gitelman's discussion of non-codex printing in "Print Culture."
8. Price's important reframing makes possible an examination of all the ways books function as a material resource rather than media. By emphasizing how books were used in the preparation and storage of food and as toilet paper, Price charts the fate of all the butterflies that did not land on the shelves of the national library. Sartre is also interested in handling of the idealized and mundane kind, noting the unread books in the library of his grandfather, who taught translation and thus had working copies and untouched editions of the same book (42–43).
9. Piper tackles this last question in *Dreaming in Books*.
10. As Lisa Gitleman and other scholars have noted, the interest in defining how the book (and print) rose to prominence has taken a sense of urgency from the idea that the age of print is waning (*Paper* 9). See Hayles and Pressman (vii) for an example of this reasoning.
11. See for example Hayles, who takes up a third-person autobiographical persona, Kay, "almost against my will" (9). See also Piper (*Book*), as well as the plethora of memoirs and elegies for the book aimed at a general audience.
12. See Zylinska and Kember's chapter "Mediation and the Vitality of Media" for a theory of this mutual constitution based on Heidegger's theory of technology (37–102).
13. "Stationer" (capital S) refers to "someone who was a member of the Stationers' Company—which included not only paper-stationers, but also printers, booksellers, and binders" (Johns xix).

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The history of licensing as a practice of law is incredibly complex, involving negotiations between the Stationers' Company and its court, and between Parliament and the monarchy. Its history spans the tumultuous period of the Reformation. See Johns (230–48) and particularly Table 3.2 "Measures Regulating the Press, 1586–1710" (232–33).

See Johnson for a discussion of the specific "paralinguistic features" that provide the conventions that guide the reader of the codex.

Stationers often defended themselves by producing "a defense of trade"—a defense of their own character—in juridical settings, in sermons, published pamphlets outlining the moral character of the printer, and in memoirs such as *The Life and Errors of John Dunton late Citizen of London; written by Himself in Solitude* (1705). See Johns (141–49).

See for example how both Douglas and Whitlock discuss the importance of book covers in the circulation of autobiography and memoir and their relationship to the cultural work life writing is positioned to undertake (Douglas 43–66; Whitlock 45–68). Rak has a chapter dedicated to the placement of memoir in bookstores (*Boom!* 73–119).

This investment can be juxtaposed with the use of circulating print by the lesser-known English author and publisher Francis Kirkman who, in 1673, published an autobiography in which he falsely presents himself as a gentlemen and in so doing comments upon the importance of one's circulation and readership in establishing the legibility of the subject (see Greene).

See, for example, Piper's discussion of Goethe's publication of multiple versions of *Wilhelm Meister's Travels* and his dispersion of the novel across a publishing network that included miscellanies, novellas, and advertisements in newspapers that Goethe took out himself (*Dreaming* 22–51).

See Hayles's discussion of how the development of copyright and the focus on *sentiment* rather than materiality contributed to the overlooking of the book in literary criticism (31–32). See also Woodmansee.

The Romantic collected edition was also an important moment in terms of the role publishers played in the formation of the literary canon (as they invested increasingly large amounts of capital, time, and resources into the production of collected editions) and their simultaneous retreat from the literary sphere as actors (Piper, *Dreaming* 56–57).

The rise of collected works in this period was, Piper argues, closely associated with "the political and economic recuperations that were taking place" in Europe "after the close of the Napoleonic wars" (*Dreaming* 58). In what we now know as Germany, the Romantic period coincided with a tumultuous period of attempts to unify German-speaking states into a single nation. The establishment of a German literary tradition was an important component of this political project. Yet Piper argues:

> If the collected edition highlighted nascent political aspirations, it also participated in the early-nineteenth-century ideal of fashioning an image of heroic individuality on which such national states were to be based. As much as any genre or discourse in the early nineteenth century, the format of the collected edition contributed to and grew out of the idea of literature as an index of personality. (59)

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23. *The Words*, Lejeune argues, is organized by Sartre's "phenomenology of temporality" that questions the idea of "the existence of the past in itself, and the identity of the relationship of succession and of the relationship of causality" (Lejeune 100). For Lejeune, this view of temporality is united with Sartre's notion of "project," a view on existence that stipulates,

> Man is not a causal system, but a freedom. Placed in a certain situation, he does not submit to it; he invents a way out of it, within the field of the possible. This invention of the future is not situated *in* the framework of time; it is this invention of the future that constitutes time. (103, emphasis in original)

The quest for meaning from a position of freedom is the Sartrean project. Sartre depicts the foundation of his bad faith, telling the story of his encounters with freedom, the anguish it provoked, and his flight from that freedom through a belief in his destiny as a writer. This originating freedom—"freedom as an absolute origin"—is the foundation of Sartre's philosophy of existentialism (Lejeune 82). "Freedom is outside the story" and is the "*hole* that engenders any story, that makes the existence of a story necessary . . . that will moreover *recur* indefinitely throughout the story, and will be, in that way, its true motor" (82, emphasis in original). Lejeune's essay explores and celebrates the deftness of Sartre's writing of this experience through a close analysis of his use of a "phenomenological" writing style and "rigorous dialectical order" (98–99). Yet he also notes that without the second volume of Sartre's autobiography, "clarifying the last part of the story" (Sartre's movement out of bad faith) the "corrosive power intended by Sartre" in writing *The Words* is not achieved (99). Sartre's continued belief in the power of the book, despite his rejection of the identity of the writer anointed by destiny, makes *The Words* a vital testament to the performative power of the book, and the fundamental importance of mediation and materiality in any act of self-representation.

24. See Littau and Hayles for arguments regarding the lack of attention to the materiality of the book in twentieth-century literary criticism.

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ON THE LECTURE CIRCUIT WITH GERTRUDE STEIN'S PORTRAITS

LINDA ZYGUTIS

Now everybody at any moment can know what it is that happens while it happens.

—Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America* (205)

Louis Mayer, cofounder of the movie studio Metro Goldwyn-Mayer, was often fond of saying, "the public makes the stars" (Schatz 42). To be sure, there is truth in this statement. As Laura Mulvey indicates, cinema itself is built on a kind of narcissistic scopophilia, the audiences' desire both to watch and to misrecognize themselves in the glamour of the screen (8–10). The successful celebrity is one who instills in the audience a marketable form of voyeurism: the public must want *them* and their lives as much as the work they produce. Thus while film introduced a celebrity's façade to the viewer, the early twentieth century also saw a growing interest in the personal lives of these seemingly untouchable figures. Not unlike the *Stars* and *Us Weeklys* of today, early fan magazines offered the chance for readers to ostensibly "reach beyond the visual image and examine and reveal the [star's] 'real' personality—his or her true loves, and most intimate of thoughts" (Dyer 61). Such "chatty-pars" exploit public interest in the personal lives of stars by purporting to offer up exclusive, insider knowledge, promising an "authentic" look at "the real person behind the star" (61). These parasocial relationships—that is, relationships formed by absorbing knowledge about a public figure's life, creating a sense of personal knowledge that does not exist in actuality—play an important role in a celebrity's star power or lack thereof. And while the public's need to "know" their object of fixation has been best represented by Hollywood's perpetual motion machine, the heavily mediated schematics of celebrity have played into the construction of stardom for literary authors as well.

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Gertrude Stein's 1934 arrival in New York prompted national news coverage, a fascinated spectacle that combined fact, interview, and wild speculation as to how a seemingly "normal and intelligent" woman could produce such "insane" writing ("Gertrude Stein Arrives"). Asked about the difficulty of her writing style, Stein insisted that she had "not invented any device, any style" but rather wrote in a way that is wholly transparent, should one only learn "how to read it." Moreover, Stein informs her audience of reporters, this skill is one that is lost, rather than gained, as young audiences and those "with the least education get it quicker than those set in their ways" ("Gertrude Stein Arrives"). While high modernism has long relinquished its claim to an inherent "great divide" separating itself from the mass market of the early twentieth century, Stein's assertion that her work is not only accessible but potentially universal is a marked contrast to the paranoid anxiety of contamination that Andreas Huyssen and so many others have read as central to the modernist aesthetic.

Rooted in the economics of modernism, early studies treat celebrity authorship as a product of necessity, a performance intended to, as Aaron Jaffe suggests, transform authorial identity "into durable promotional vehicles for their careers" against an increasingly powerful mass market (3). Such an assertion, however, retains the assumption of mass culture as inherently oppositional to the modernist project; it imagines literary modernism's induction into mass culture as a kind of grudging acquiescence, an unpleasant necessity in the face of the twentieth century's shifting economics. Further, it simplifies celebrity into a "static object," to borrow a term from Timothy W. Galow: a unidirectional performance mounted to preserve an author's own cultural capital against the threat of total induction into the popular market. Galow goes on to argue that such criticisms "deter questions about the potential influence marketing efforts could have had" (316) on both authors and audience—questions that almost invariably require an acknowledgment that celebrity is not, as Jaffe suggests, "authorial self-fashioning" (12), but rather a dynamic process controlled not by the author but by the market and the industry surrounding it. While book tours, public lectures, and radio and television interviews offered unprecedented access to popular figures, such material was often carefully crafted and heavily mediated. Journalist Robert Herring recalled an instance of such industry mediation in a 1928 article for film magazine *Close Up*: a scripted interview prepared on behalf of "Miss X" which arrived, "all done, ready for them, sent out with the weekly news sheets" ("Publicity" 38). Such dissemination of near-identical material allowed for the creation of a fairly homogenous star persona. For a celebrity like Stein, whose interaction with her public had, until then, been almost exclusively textual, this dissemination provided American audiences with their first "real" glimpse of Gertrude Stein the celebrity.

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Though Stein continues to enjoy a fair amount of attention from scholars in both celebrity and gender studies when it comes to *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, relatively little has been written on the materiality of the book's promotion. More specifically, little attention has been paid to the degree to which the marketing of the text relied on misrepresenting both the author and the nature of her work. Stein's publishers, distributers, and the media attempted to capitalize on the reputation of the autobiographical genre as "women's fiction" to package a new and intelligible Gertrude Stein, based not on her fiction but on her fictionalized relationships with other popular public figures. In working with an author like Stein, whose interactions with her public had until now been almost exclusively textual, marketing *The Autobiography* meant reassuring audiences of the author's readability. Largely downplaying the linguistic complexity of her work, the book's promoters emphasized its connection to Stein's coterie of Parisian friends and followers, effectively packaging Stein herself as a kind of a matronly celebrity centrifuge, the "eminent American woman" (Turner 118). Thus, upon embarking on her American lecture tour in 1934, Stein found herself facing a public intimately familiar with "Gertrude Stein" constructed almost entirely by ephemera and, not for the first time, wanting to make herself understood to audiences who were not well prepared to comprehend her.

Following Sharon Kirsch's assertion that Stein's lecture tours offer a kind of modernist self-promotion, capitalizing on her celebrity to "introduce an American audience to her modernist compositional process" (255), I would argue that Stein's lectures are best understood as a reassertion not only of her compositional process but also of her own literary and physical identity. Stein's techniques of narrative and repetition found in the collected essays of *Lectures in America* challenge the authenticity of a celebrity culture in which "anybody knows what anybody does" at a time when Stein's own image was defined largely by her own market-mediated reputation (*Lectures* 182). At the height of her success, Stein attempts both to articulate and renegotiate the terms of her own celebrity by challenging the narratives of authenticity and transparency on which her own notoriety is based. While Stein's use of her lectures to differentiate the heavily mediated discourse of "newspaper narrative" from the intimate talk of the private sphere suggests a measure of frustration with her public, her emphasis on the reader's role in disentangling the two domains reflects an optimism she retained regarding the market that throws into question Stein's continued place as an honorary member of modernism's separatist elite. Stein's lectures can thus be seen as her own kind of authorial signature: a means of reclaiming her own personality from the transformative effects of the promotional machine.

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LADIES' GOSSIP: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL APPEAL

In December of 1932, Gertrude Stein's agent W. A. Bradley sent to *The Atlantic* a manuscript of what would become her most commercially popular work, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Pitched as a glimpse into Stein's elite circle of Parisian bohemia, the book was warmly received by *The Atlantic*'s editor in chief Ellery Sedgwick, who praised the manuscript for finally breaking through Stein's literary impenetrability and promising access to the popular market. "There has been a lot of pother about this book of yours," Sedgwick enthused to Stein in his responding letter, adding, "I think you felt my constant hope the time would come when the real Miss Stein would pierce the smoke-screen with which she has always so mischievously surrounded herself" (Gallup 126). The text has all the earmarks of a best seller, as "the apparent location of its voice in a unified and coherent 'character' (the homespun and gossipy Alice Toklas)" and its "relatively linear 'plot' (the travails of a group of *avant-gardistes* in the heyday of modernism)" marked a departure from Stein's experimental work in favor of a narratively straightforward—and commercially viable—text (Will 137).

Sedgwick's enthusiasm for this new, "real" Stein reflects a specific set of cultural assumptions as well. The role of media had "transformed the relationship between Americans and their public figures," driving interest in the authentic "self" behind the fame through detailed histories and ghost-authored tell-alls in newspapers and special-interest magazines (Bentley 130). This role was especially true for the public woman, whose presence on the national—or transnational—stage, Nancy Bentley argues in *Frantic Panoramas*, had come to embody the modern era, where changes in society and status had created a "new woman" for the twentieth century: unimposing, middle class, educated and financially stable enough to consider a career pursuing artistry or status but still polite enough to express a decorous ambiguity regarding their own success should they achieve it (130). At the core of this awkward performance lies a constant tension between fame and gender norms. Even as public women eschewed or downplayed their own success, such actions were strategic, bolstering the public's perception of their "authenticity." The image of this "new" public woman played upon cultural stereotypes of women as chatty denizens of the domestic sphere, prone to confession rather than invention. Chad Bennett summarizes the phenomenon, recognizing that "when we pose the question of what gossip sounds like to western drama, literature, philosophy, anthropology, or religion, we are likely to hear, for instance, that gossip sounds like a woman. And if we ask, in turn, what [ladies' voices sound] like . . . the tautological reply will often be 'a gossip'" (314). For Stein, who had already made a name for herself in the United States as a fascinating be-

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intimidating purveyor of nonsense, *The Autobiography* humanized the author. It also delivered as expected to an audience who had been conditioned to understand the autobiography as a genre well-suited to a woman writer.

Eager to capitalize on the public's curiosity, publisher Harcourt, Brace and Company was quick to market *The Autobiography* as confessional, a "gossipy testimony to [Stein's] own genius" that would familiarize audiences not only with Stein's art and style, but with Stein herself (Glass 115). An early advertisement for new biographies published in a December 1933 issue of the *Chicago Tribune* promoted the book by highlighting Stein's celebrity and celebrity, describing the memoir as one in which "a great American writer, personality, and influence, speaks out in a most disarming manner, writing down the story of her life" (Turner 118). Another from the September 1933 *New York Times Book Review*, promotes the book by touting Stein as the "eminent American woman" both "in her writing and her friendships" (118). Copy along both sides of the advertisement even goes so far as to list "the people in the book," a parade of artistic and literary lions from Picasso to Bertrand Russell. In both of these cases, emphasis is placed first and foremost on the novel as a biography of Stein herself: a narrative purporting to reveal the intimate details of private lives, to share "in a most disarming manner" the "authentic" selves behind the famous names and personalities identified in the advertising copy. Such marketing tactics play to the audiences' desire to "penetrate other lives," transforming biography into an imagined vehicle for gossip: one dependent upon our trust in the narrator to offer us unmediated, "authentic" access to the subjects of the narrative (Spacks 93). Positioning Stein as the "eminent American woman" assumes her central role among the Parisian *milieu* of whom she writes, validating her narrative position in the story. The fact that this particular story lay so far outside traditional social and gender roles for the early twentieth century only served to make the gossip it offered more desirable to its audience. This was Gertrude Stein, unmasked, as close as rubbing elbows with the Parisian literati as the average reader was likely to get.

At its most basic level, of course, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is a fraud. Named for Stein's companion and lover Toklas, and written ostensibly from her point of view, the text plays on the conventions of the autobiographical genre to suggest a kind of intimate transparency. Like portraiture, autobiography is a genre of representation, offering its reader an expectation of full disclosure. But this clarity is problematized by the fact that it is Stein writing about herself using Toklas's imagined voice as a conceit. As Goldman, Will, and others have noted, Toklas's function within her own autobiography is to run interference. She sits with the "wives of geniuses" as Stein

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monopolizes the attention of the novel's men (and fellow geniuses) (Stein, *The Autobiography* 14). Her position destabilizes the narrative of the text, calling into question its legitimacy: it is "Toklas," not Stein, who speaks to the reader in personal, sometimes excruciating detail. To Toklas, the famous names in *The Autobiography* are just that: names. Though Toklas claims early on to have heard a "bell ring" each time she met a real, true "genius," this statement becomes absurd when placed in concert with the ultimately superficial portraits "Toklas" paints of each figure she recalls encountering. Even Toklas herself possesses only a limited knowledge of the "genius" she professes to inherently understand. In one amusing if esoteric moment, she reminisces upon Matisse's completion of the *Bonheur de Vivre*, a famous painting associated with the vivid and animalistic fauvist style of modernist art, simplified by Toklas as "a zoo."

Certainly, the text is the least "Steinian" of Stein's work. It is singularly accessible, even commercial. Prior to its publication, Stein was perhaps best-known for her inaccessibility, as the author of texts which de-emphasize (and reject) the narrative capacity of language in favor of calling attention to it as a series of problematic signs. The term "Steinian" itself might be said to describe the very absence of the kind of descriptive accessibility *The Autobiography* offers. Marianne DeKoven describes Stein's typical style as "incoherent," representing "an order of meaning which our overwhelming valorization of coherent, referential sense in literature generally prevents us from recognizing" (83). With this in mind, it is easy to see how *The Autobiography*, with its apparently straightforward "gossip" about the personalities of Paris, might be taken as a deliberate bow to the popular marketplace. Harcourt was eager enough to capitalize on the seeming transformation: one 1934 ad in *The Saturday Review of Literature* (Fig. 1) went so far as to publicize the book by repeating the title of the book over and over with the word "talk!" boldly inscribed over it, an image meant not only to invoke the autobiography's style but also to assure a popular market of the text's clarity and conversational style. The message behind the advertisement is clear: *The Autobiography* was, for once, Stein breaking through her seemingly private language to actually "talk." But while *The Autobiography* marks Stein's first success in the realm of celebrity authorship, to accept the text as sequestered away from Stein's linguistically experimental work is to fall prey to a false binary. In July of 1927, Stein sent Sedgwick her literary portrait of Cezanne, which she prefaced as being "as short as possible and it is about Cezanne who was one of my big influences" (Gallup 124). Stein demonstrates a keen knowledge of what constitutes a "successful" sell: in this case, the apt (and somewhat amusing) pitch that her manuscript is "as short as possible." She is also cognizant that success is tied to name recognition, insisting the portrait is "about" Cezanne, the

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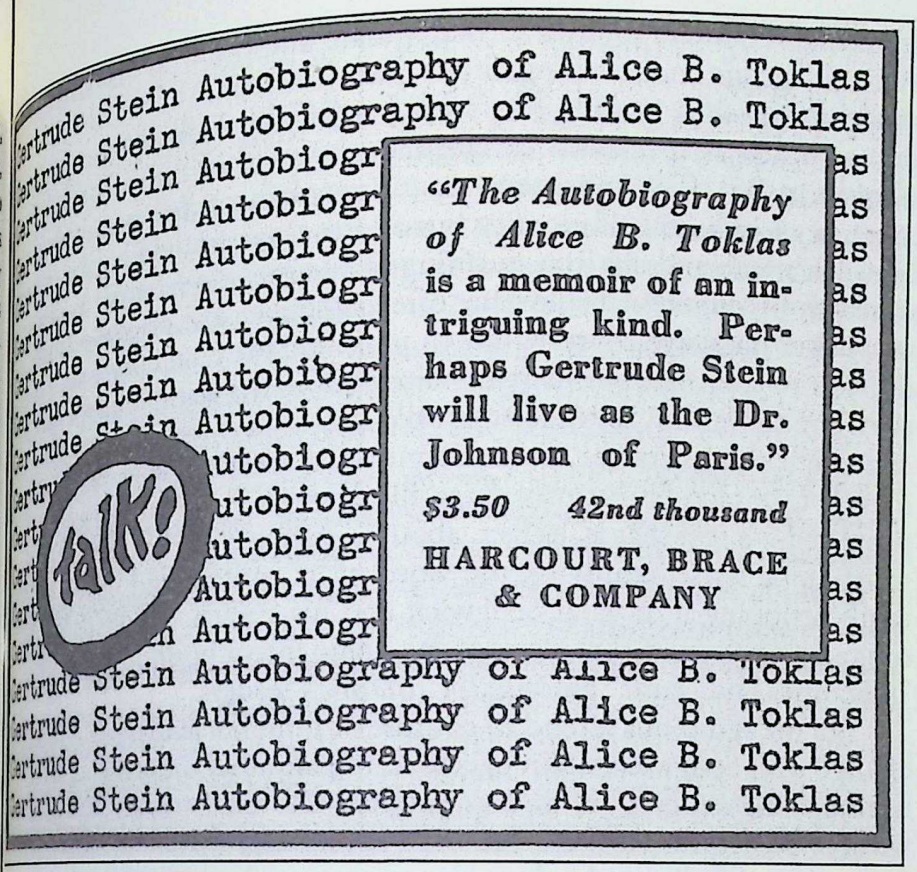

Figure 1. A 1934 advertisement for *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 13 Jan. 1934.

influential impressionist whom, Stein assumes, "surely your audience has got-ten to." Shrewdly, Stein asserts the importance of her own presence as well: Cezanne is "one of [her] big influences," and thus of course the combined result is "very good" (124).

Stein's literary portraits are, arguably, the pinnacle of obtuse, quintessentially "Steinian" modernism, and the portrait of "Cezanne" is no exception. In contrast to *The Autobiography* (and her insistences to Sedgwick), "Cezanne" is not a conventional character sketch. The portrait provides little to no insight into the identity of Paul Cezanne, public or private. Other than its title, "Cezanne," in fact, seems to have little to do with the painter at all, offering instead a tribute to Stein's own obscure, inexorable brand of literary genius. Rather than provide a look at Cezanne himself, Stein uses his supposed portrait to work out the play of language as sound rather than language as content. Repetitions of key phrases (like "every day," "to-day," and "surprised") build on one another without signifying anything, let alone the by then famous artist for whom the piece is titled. In using the names of her famous

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friends and contemporaries to manipulate and toy with the relationship between language and meaning, Stein "puts [the names of her subjects] in close range' for readers, making [the name] signify an ordinary person within her text as much as it does an extraordinary person in the extra-textual world" (Goldman 92). The consistent repetition of the artist's name seems not to serve as an indicator of identity but as a means of muddling the connection between name and subject: meaning is persistently deferred, leaving readers to search for contextual clues that offer significance or place the portrait within a larger narrative context. Put to paper without auditory cues, it becomes difficult to speculate with any certainty about the significance of such repetition. Are we meant, as readers, to take language at its face value? Or does the consistent overuse of the word strip it of its meaning, suggesting the speaker may not, in fact, be "surprised" at all? Though Stein has delivered exactly as promised—a text that is, in fact, about Cezanne—she has done so only in the most literal sense, emptying the word of its content and meaning, and certainly stripping it of what Sedgwick and his audience really desire, the kind of gossipy narration that elevates the name into a position of icon, that links "Cezanne" and "fame" among *The Atlantic*'s readers.

But Stein did not intend to confuse or limit her audience. In an earlier exchange with Sedgwick, Stein balked at the idea that the audience for her work need be "*literati*, etc.," to understand her. On the contrary, Stein believed her work to be "legitimate literature and I amuse and interest myself in words as an expression of feeling as Shakespeare or anyone else writing did. This is entirely in the spirit of all that is first class in American letters whether it's newspapers Walt Whitman or Henry James, or Poe" (qtd. in Will 133). By connecting her work to realist American authors like Whitman and Poe, or even the daily paper, Stein demonstrates a genuine belief in the public's ability to comprehend even her most "impenetrable" work. By designating Stein a member of some elite "literati," Sedgwick thus excludes her from the well-loved (and well-circulated) American canon. But more significant is how Stein's insistence on her writing's accessibility recontextualizes her use of portraiture later in her career. For all of her writing's seeming impenetrability, Stein's lecture tour focuses heavily on these portraits in terms of writing down identity: of recognition, memory, and the impossibility of capturing the whole of a personality in a single text or visual image. Her interest in "knowing," coming as it does out of the success of *The Autobiography*, does not exist separate from her larger body of work, nor is it simply a means of baffling her audience now that she has one. Rather, Stein uses the conventions of celebrity gossip with which she has been associated as a marketing tool, bringing in a narrative-hungry audience and using their fascination with celebrity to trouble the system that creates it. While Stein herself was never above dealing "good gossip," she insisted that it be produced and circulated on her own terms.

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A DIFFICULT SELL IN "YOUR UNITED STATES"

ch of Stein's problem in achieving commercial success with her work, at e until the publication of *The Autobiography*, was quite simply that her utation had preceded her. Stately, blunt, queer, and no stranger to self- motion, Stein stood in stark contrast to the middlebrow's demurring odern woman," becoming something of a peculiarity to the American blic and a point of vexed interest to an American press that seemed un- how to promote her. "Widely ridiculed and seldom enjoyed," or even e most publicized but least-read writer" of the twentieth century, Stein's ge had been codified by news reporters and enthusiastic reviewers before e even stepped foot on American soil (Leick 1). Early "reviews" of her lec- s focused more on Stein's "enigmatic countenance" and curious "secre- " than on her work itself, noting her "square-shoulder[s]" and "mannish" ss, making her gender presentation—or rather, her refusal to conform to e expectations thereof—as much a part of her so-called eccentricity as her ting itself. Even at her most unquestionably accessible, the press empha- ed her reputation for the peculiar. The *New York Times*, heralding her 1934 val in New York, exclaimed sarcastically that "Gertrude Stein Arrives and ades Reporters by Making Herself Clear" (25), despite the fact that Stein's val came on the heels of the success of the immensely "clear," now best- ng book, *The Autobiography*.

To be sure, the image of Gertrude Stein as eccentric artist had been thor- ly grafted onto the public consciousness, with "Steinian" language ap- ring in the most seemingly incongruent of places. One advertisement, ich ran in the *New York Times* in 1934, used Stein's most famous circular ase, "a rose is a rose is a rose" to sell women's hats (Tischler 14). e Steinian marketing campaign extended to Bergdorf's Fifth Avenue dis- y case, where illuminated letters above a window of men's attire proclaimed eature "4 Suits in 2 Acts": a reference to Stein's libretto, *Four Saints in ree Acts* (Tischler 23). But as is so often the case with fame, Stein's celeb- y was superficial, focusing more on her work's inaccessibility than on any uine interest in unlocking its content. As the *New York Times* speculated 1935, "we didn't want to understand [the intellectual elite]—we wanted to Einstein. . . . We want to see the great, and rub elbows with them" (Mack- e SM9). For Stein, this fascination held a more troubling undercurrent. ing come to her lecture tour by way of *The Autobiography*, Stein's new- audience was very much interested in the author as a figure of "good ip" within the literary community. This interest made for an inevitable adox, as while her so-called "eccentric" identity had been thoroughly and

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enthusiastically appropriated by the public, outside of *The Autobiography*, than writing had not.

Though *The Autobiography* succeeded in bridging the gap between Stein's heretofore incomprehensible "genius" and the sensibilities of the average middlebrow reader, it did so by reaffirming in the public a hunger for exactly the kind of cartoonish, gossipy figures that Stein had sought to ridicule. Paradoxical or not, the characters created by *The Autobiography* were the exact sort of celebrities who already fascinated the American public. As a result, while Stein experienced her first taste of commercial success with the book's publication, it was success tempered with the growing knowledge that she herself had become, in the eyes of the public, the very figure that *The Autobiography* lampooned. Thus, Stein's first engagement with financial success also served to convince the mass market of the very thing that Stein would have insisted against. After years of inscrutability, the public finally believed that they "knew" Gertrude Stein.

LECTURES IN AMERICA AND THE ARTIFICE OF "KNOWING"

In 1934, Stein made her first trip back to the United States in over thirty years as a newly minted celebrity. Writing about the experience in *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein describes arriving in New York to see her own name winking back at her, lit up in marquee lights

> moving around a building and it said Gertrude Stein has come and that was upsetting. Anybody saying how do you do to you and knowing your name may be upsetting enough but to suddenly see your name is always upsetting. Of course it has happened to me pretty often and I like it to happen just as often but always it does give me a little shock of recognition and non-recognition. (459–60)

In seeing her own name displayed in such a manner, Stein experiences a disconnect. She both recognizes her name (because it is her own) and regards it as foreign (written on a marquee being used to advertise "Gertrude Stein," the popular commodity). Her discomfort is compounded by what she describes as the curious reality of having people she has never met before greet her in the street, emboldened by perceived intimate knowledge of her life:

> How do you do Miss Stein said the man, how do you do, I said, and how do you like it, he said, very much I said, he said it must be pleasant coming back after thirty years, and I said it certainly was. He was so natural about knowing my name that it was not surprising and yet we had not expected anything like that to happen. (459)

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Stein's arrival in New York marks her first authentic "celebrity" experience. Seeing her name in lights not only represents a shrewd marketing tactic; it marks a tangible confrontation with herself as the "famous" Gertrude Stein. What sparks Stein's "shock of recognition and non-recognition," then, is her awareness that the image to which her greeter is responding is both herself and not herself. While it is her book that has created the Stein whom the American public recognizes, this tangible representation of her celebrity self is nonetheless a stranger, both produced and disseminated without her knowledge.

"This ability of a signifier to transform so far beyond its referent is, as Stein notes, "one of the things most worrying in the subject of identity" ("And Now" 280). Writing "the story of [her] life" for *Vanity Fair* in September of 1934, Stein describes what she felt to be a loss of her own authenticity accompanying her mainstream visibility, a crippling awareness that her public self, at least, had become a construction dependent upon the gaze of others (280). "You know the nursery rhyme," Stein begins in her "And Now" editorial: "I am I because my little dog knows me. Well you see I did not know myself, I lost my personality. It has always been completely included in myself my personality as any personality naturally is, and here all of the sudden, I was not I because so many people did know me" (280). In a marked departure from the notion of celebrity as "*self*-fashioning in extremis" put forth by Glass and others, Stein's relationship to her audience and market was at best symbiotic (Glass 12, emphasis added). For Stein, fame brought with it a plurality of selves, and with them, expectations associated with her newfound success. More alarming, however, was its adverse effect on her material self, the art born of her own creative genius. With the public now aware of and clamoring for any detail about Stein's life, she frets that her life, and more troubling, her work, was no longer her own.

Stein's anxiety was not without merit. Even as her sales blossomed, with Random House's offering American publications of many of her older works, success came with a caveat. It was not Stein's "genius" that was selling, nor her literary project. Publishers were quick to capitalize on the perceived gossipy nature of the autobiography, promising the same insider details the public consumed voraciously in *The Autobiography*. The text printed on the 1934 jacket cover of Random House's first edition of *Portraits and Prayers*, for instance, leaves no question as to what the publisher hopes will encourage the public to buy the book:

> Random House celebrates the return of Gertrude Stein to her native land after an absence of thirty years with the publication of "Portraits and Prayers." The series of lectures to be delivered by Miss Stein in the leading universities of America has aroused the widest interest in academic and secessionist literary circles. Several of

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these lectures refer to the material in "Portraits and Prayers;" the chief address, in fact, derives its title from the book. Her homecoming and the simultaneous publication of her newest work become the occasion for many tributes to a world-renowned figure who occupies a single position in contemporary letters. "Portraits and Prayers" is an album of intimate characterizations of her friends. It impales on its sharpest phrases such celebrities as Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse, T. S. Eliot, Jean Cocteau, Ernest Hemingway, Carl Van Vechten, Sherwood Anderson, Joe Davidson, Mabel Dodge, Edith Sitwell and many others.

Though we are invited to pay tribute to a "world-renowned figure who occupies a single position in contemporary letters," it is evident that Stein's intellectual weight in "academic and secessionist literary circles" is hardly the reason we are expected to purchase this text. Rather, Random House is quick to call upon the trope of the gossip to suggest *Portraits and Prayers* might offer us insight into *other* (better-known) modernist powerhouses, lauding the text's position as an "album of intimate characterizations" of "such celebrities as" T. S. Eliot, Picasso, Hemingway, and more. Rather than promoting Stein in such a way that would foreground her own value as an artist and writer, this tome of Stein's abstract work instead seeks to cement her public persona as an eccentric and, more importantly, a "genuine article": an authentic link to other, in some cases more famous, authors and artists. Even at the height of her success, Stein's own identity is quickly overshadowed by the publisher-mediated image of herself as a mentor and mystery—a discursive function over which she has little control.

It's easy to see why Stein's lecture series might represent Stein's attempt to rein in control of her public persona by reaffirming to the audience the absurdity of "knowing" a person through mediated gossip and heavily censored narration. Stein presents her portraits—defined by a continuous cycle of what she calls "listening and talking" in juxtaposition to "repeating"—as a challenge to the very pretense of a single, knowable identity. But more significantly, Stein presents *herself* to an audience expecting someone very different. In doing so, Stein deliberately rejects false familiarity, dismissing the kind of assumptive knowledge on which celebrity culture is based as a game of reflective surfaces, too superficial ever to be authentic. Secondhand knowledge is useless, Stein bemoans; armed with enough details, "everybody can remember almost anything" (*Lectures* 181).

NEWSPAPERS, NARRATIVES, KNOWING

One of the central lectures of Stein's tour, "Portraits and Repetition," concerns itself almost exclusively with questions of identity and the authenticity of "knowing." In this lecture, Stein makes a firm distinction between

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epetition" and "insistence." For her, it is important to differentiate these ms because of the level of intimacy they suggest between the subject and speaker. "Repetition," to Stein, represents a kind of failure to express a ing in its essence, to understand what makes a thing really, truly exciting. repeat oneself is to recreate the same fixed and static subject over and over, create a caricature, a name and persona with no identity behind it. Drawfrom celebrity iconography, Stein references the recently executed John illinger to make her point, explaining that "it was not what he did that was iting but the excitement of what he was as being exciting that was exciting" tures 182–83). Stein's choice of Dillinger as an example is worth noting: roughout his career, the gangster had become notorious for using the press his own public relations, speaking out in press conferences and joking h journalists and the camera (*Crime Wave*). Dillinger's charm and public rception as a kind of "Robin Hood" outlaw in the midst of the Great Deression left public opinion at odds with the media's portrayal of him as "killer," vicious, and indiscriminately violent (Gorn).

Of particular note is Dillinger's style of interaction with the public, as the angster was recorded by the press while facing arrest several times, during ich he was portrayed laughing, smiling at the camera, and telling jokes—a ry from the perceived "cop-killer" (*Crime Wave*). But Stein's example was ctly, too. With Dillinger's death in July of 1934 making national headlines, e disparity between his public and media portrayal was thrown into sharp ef. While the portrayal of Dillinger in the media remained that of a vio- gang leader, stories circulated that told a very different story of Dillinger's ploits. Dillinger, the desperado, always one step ahead of incompetent law- rcers. Dillinger, hero to the average Joe, telling a bank customer during a robry: "I don't want your money, just the bank's" (Gorn 192). Regardless of its curacy, the narrative of the cold-blooded killer advanced by the press and lice never caught on like the private stories, rumors, and gossip that prolifated within a public more interested in Dillinger as a folk hero.

At the core of Stein's lectures is the belief that the heavily mediated struce of "newspaper narrative" does not offer a look at its subjects as they "re- ly are," but rather, as two-dimensional and ultimately superficial replicas. Portraits and Repetition" makes an important distinction between the deption of a person's actions and who they really are: the difference between rely retelling and genuinely *knowing*, according to Stein. This argument, it erns, begins with precisely the kind of secondhand gossip that makes up the lebrity culture in which the American public has become immersed. "What es it really matter what anybody does," Stein asks of her audience; she con- ues, "The newspapers are full of what anybody does and anybody knows

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what anybody does" (*Lectures* 182). The media, Stein argues, is a true perpetrator of repetition. Just as the early "chatty-pars" reduce celebrities to easily marketed types, so too do the secondhand descriptors found in the mainstream press fail to capture more than a superficial echo of the life of a public figure. The result is nothing more than a "joke," as Stein herself describes *The Autobiography* in her lectures. Figures like the painfully shy Rousseau, or a Matisse whose life constituted a one-man soap opera, are too simplified, too *simplistic*, to exist. The realization Stein comes to, in considering the impossibility of "knowing" a person in this way, is that such a thing is categorically impossible. For Stein, this is the inevitable link between *The Autobiography* and her larger project, the "Steinese" in which she has always written. As she explains in her lecture: "I wondered if there were any way of making what I know come out as I know it not as remembering. I found this very exciting. And I began to make portraits" (*Lectures* 181).

"Portraits and Repetition" informs Stein's audience up front of its intention to strip them of their de facto method of conceptualizing identity. Initially, of course, Stein's method does not sound all that far from the descriptive narrative that makes up *The Autobiography*. Like any "good gossip" it is rooted in stating aloud what one knows: "I began writing the portraits of any one by saying what I knew of that one as I talked and listened that one, and each time that I talked and listened that one I said what I knew they were then" (*Lectures* 185). But as Stein begins to reveal, her conceptualization of identity is not based on external, descriptive representation, but rather on something less immediately tangible. In providing her example, Stein returns yet again to another famous name, that of Cezanne, the subject of the same portrait that so vexed Sedgwick years prior. Cezanne offers an excellent example of Stein's theory of representation because, she explains, it is impossible to view a Cezanne the same way twice. "Slowly," she explains, "through all of this and looking at many many pictures I came to Cezanne and there you were, at least there I was, not all at once but as soon as I got used to it" (76). Stein calls upon the painter, whose post-impressionist work gained attention both for its invocation of subject and also for its abstract, at times primitive rejection of traditional "realist" painterly conventions, as her muse precisely because the subjects of his paintings, she insists, manifest without exact representation: "The apples looked like apples the chairs looked like chairs and it all has nothing to do with anything because if they did not look like apples or chairs or landscape or people they were apples and chairs and landscape and people" (77). DeKoven notes that in Stein's early work abstract art, particularly impressionism and its later (and more contemporary to Stein) form, cubism, was appealing to her for "the way its relatively loose strictures on meaning, on the

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...ge and significance of content, expanded the possibilities of literature for ...writer of her radical possibilities" (82). Though DeKoven adds that any as...ciation of Stein's work as "cubist" is problematic because, "unlike words, ...ained shapes are not necessarily signs," and Stein likely found kinship in the ...ory of abstraction to call attention to the artifices of "transparent" realism ...). At the heart of Stein's experimental writing lies an awareness of what it ...cites us, a "stimulating, perhaps infuriating sense that these phrases almost ...like sense, that they hover close to coherence, yet remain insistently, even ...versely, above it" (86). As Stein describes the perfection of Cezanne's art, ...e also acknowledges the impossibility of ever explaining it in full: "there ...s no reason why it should be but it was" (*Lectures* 77).

BIOGRAPHY, PORTRAITURE, INSISTENCE

...sistence is key to understanding the importance of Stein's invocation of Ce...nne in this lecture. While Stein herself was not a cubist, it's clear that she ...ls a kinship with the artist, or at least a sense of familiarity in viewing ...s work. In describing the difference between "repetition" and "insistence," ...ein calls upon the childhood memory of her aunts in Baltimore: eleven ...ery lively little aunts who had to know everything," who inevitably "made ...erything said often" (*Lectures* 168–69). To Stein this was not repetition but ...sistence: eleven aunts with eleven stories, each engaged in personal debate ...er whose version was clearest. In contrast to the "newspaper narratives" ...ein dismisses, this kind of private gossip is authentic to the speaker, produc...g a multifaceted image, one that reveals itself both in time and in telling. ...t unlike Stein's beloved Cezanne paintings, "insistence" is a matter of nu...nce: with each aunt comes a different "angle," a new perspective from which ...view a story or person or new piece of gossip. Of course, such knowledge ...mes with a caveat. This level of nuance can only occur if one already has a ...el of personal experience with the subject in question; it cannot be offered ...via secondhand depiction. Indeed, repetition, says Stein, occurs "when ...re are descriptions being given of these things" in lieu of their actual pres...ce (*Lectures* 170–71). Stein's example of her aunts seems to suggest that gos...—the immediate, intimate kind—is a genre with inherent limitations, de...dent as it is on conversation and exchange, dually "talking and listening" ...her than merely dictating (*Lectures* 171).

Such is the paradox of the Steinian portrait, and consequently, of Stein's ...ures themselves. "Biography and portraiture," according to Marcia Poin...n, "are often seen as contiguous disciplines . . . both serving in the creation ...an authentic likeness" (15). The portrait is one of the "defining metaphors

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of Western culture," a kind of descriptive character sketch that proposes to offer a hungry audience intimate descriptive details about the subject's life (Pointon 23). The goal is to represent a purportedly "authentic" subject to popular consciousness. Stein, on the other hand, was interested in what she felt Cezanne could do in his abstractions: project the "essence" of a subject in a series of mutable exchanges between the "thing itself" and the world around it (*Lectures* 77). In contrast to "knowing," "essence" is perpetually unfinished by nature. Like a Cezanne painting, it can only capture pieces and be seen from one angle; while many viewings, or what Stein calls "insistence," may gradually reveal essence, essence cannot be reduced to two dimensions, cannot be pinned down, fixed, or held still. It exists as a "continuous presence," its authenticity assured by its refusal to transmit the same meaning in all situations: "Every time I said what they were I said it so that they were this thing and each time I said what they were as they were, as I was, naturally more or less but never the same thing each time" (*Lectures* 185). Stein's "essence" is difficult to conceptualize largely because it cannot be descriptively represented. It makes the most sense when oriented within Stein's indictment of celebrity culture's fixation on authenticity as a whole.

Nowhere is this more significant than in the section of *Lectures in America* entitled "Poetry and Grammar," where Stein makes a direct link between the descriptive knowledge of mainstream media and the impenetrability of essence, the "thing in itself" that exists outside of what can be compiled through what she calls, quite pointedly, "newspaper narrative" (245). In contrast to the "essence" of an individual's selfhood, "newspaper narrative" only purports to tell us about the outside of a subject: "a name of anything," Stein explains, "and a name of anything is not interesting" (231). Stein's criticism of media culture recalls her earlier indictment of celebrity: specifically, that once the popular market decides they "know" a version of Gertrude Stein, it is the public and not her who controls that image. The issue, as Stein sees it, lies in the public's desire to reduce the intricacies of human experience to a narrative created and disseminated to titillate the masses. Such simplification creates caricatures. Writing with a mind to capture subjects as they "really are" has the paradoxical effect of erasing any chance of such authenticity via reductive assumptions based on superficial observation. For an author whose literary project is marked by the rupturing of simplified notions of "knowing," narrative creates a dangerous expectation. It assumes that an individual, an objective, an *experience* can be extracted, congealed, and put to paper; it assumes that it can be commodified, packaged for the masses. Within the context of Stein as a figure of some infamy, it assumes that her own identity can be discovered and understood without her consent or input.

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Stein's concern with "newspaper narrative" reflects a larger struggle against the notion of the single, master narrative of artistry and literary "genius" that was at the center of both *The Autobiography*'s success and her own fraught relationship with fame. As Stein's own tour demonstrated, the machine that marketed even "high" modern literature was at times dangerously reductive. The biographical facts and secondhand gossip that make up middlebrow fame create not an accurate representation of a subject but a totem, a known as emptied of meaning as the supposed subjects of Stein's portraiture. This very real push and pull between author and market conditions suggest an avenue of modernist studies still rarely examined, as studies of celebrity and the marketplace often assume a certain autonomy not available to the majority of even modernism's canonized authors. Stein's lecture series, hinging on her distinctly *non*-descriptive literary portraits, explicitly rebukes the mechanisms of celebrity by undermining the assumptions upon which they operate: that language is transparent, that the continued reinscription of a subject is not an act steeped in artifice, and, above all, that identity can be transposed through descriptive knowledge of an individual, precisely the kind of "newspaper knowledge" on which fame relies. To really "tell" about a subject, Stein concludes, one must reject entirely the expectation that a subject can be "known" at all.

Though Stein's work never again reached the best-seller status achieved by *The Autobiography*, she considered her lecture tour to have been a success. In a brief interview with the *New York Times* given before returning to France, Stein once again suggested that while the older generation "have to struggle against too many preconceived ideas" to understand her work, "the whole younger crowd understand it" ("Youth Understands"). This may have been an overly optimistic reading of US culture, but Stein's statements were not without merit. While Stein's lectures did not bring down the Hollywood industry, the tour itself vocally resisted the dominant cultural assumption that fame is transparent, pulling back the veil on the artifice of celebrity to an audience drawn in by it. In this sense, perhaps Stein was correct in looking forward toward future generations when considering the value of her critiques. If a glance at a magazine stand or *TMZ* is any indication, we are a future far more cognizant of the artifice of celebrity.

If nothing else, we are a future far more dedicated to celebrity's voyeuristic thrill.

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REVIEWS

Hilary Dickinson and Michael Erben. *Nostalgia and Auto/Biography: Considering the Past in the Present*. British Sociological Association Auto/Biography Study Group, 2016. ISBN 978-0956426154, £38.65.

In *Nostalgia and Auto/Biography: Considering the Past in the Present*, Hilary Dickinson and Michael Erben explore the rich concept of nostalgia with a particular focus on the role of nostalgia in the construction of the autobiographical self. From the backdrop of nostalgia's medical roots (for example, nostalgia as disease), Dickinson and Erben delineate the changing conceptions of the term over time, especially highlighting the psychoanalytic and sociological approaches to nostalgia.

The authors stress that nostalgia is a "secondary" (rather than "primary") emotion. As such, nostalgia is not identified as a basic, innate emotion in the same way that, for instance, fear and anger typically are. The categorizing of nostalgia as a secondary emotion, however, does not negate its significance; in fact, the emotion may have heightened importance insofar as nostalgia is "an emotion that we can . . . contemplate as we experience it" (2). Dickinson and Erben suggest that the term "elaborated" emotion is more fitting than "secondary" in describing nostalgia. Referring to an emotion as elaborated highlights the necessity of language, human expression, and, most importantly, a social context in which the emotion manifests. Nostalgia is an especially intriguing experience in the sense that it can be said to rely upon a combination of the physiological, the cognitive, and the somatic. Dickinson and Erben note, "Emotions may be evoked by internal thought processes and also, frequently, by an interaction between the external and internal worlds—as when a smell, a taste or a place can conjure up Nostalgic memories" (21). In this context, the work of Dennis D. Waskul, Phillip Vannini, and myself on the relationships among olfactory perception, memory, nostalgia, and the self is relevant. The limbic region of the brain is where memories and emotions are stored. The sense of smell evokes the past, often in quite powerful ways. While a particular smell or taste might "conjure up" the nostalgia, this sensory experience is complemented by cognitions, perceptions, and evaluative reflections. Nostalgia is indeed a multifaceted emotion!

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In their chapter "Nostalgia and Children's Literature," Dickinson and Erdiscuss the theme of childhood as a time of innocence in early children's erature. In their consideration of classics such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in nderland* and J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, they convincingly demonstrate how stalgia is incorporated into these books as an adult concern, thus giving sight into the writers' own experience with memory and nostalgia. The apter on children's literature is followed by a chapter in which Dickinson d Erben trace, as precursors to contemporary conceptions of nostalgia, the alizing of the pastoral. Examining poetry from the classical period, Dickson and Erben juxtapose pastoral poetry with pastoral elegy, cleverly depictg the two key aspects of nostalgia: an idealized countryside and the loss of th a place (and time). An agrarian lifestyle was seen as embodying fundaental values conducive to a healthy community, for as Dickinson and Erben te, "The poet longs for a different world, for the simpler and purer conciousness of country folk that has been lost" (57). It follows, then, that the alization that urbanization threatened this ideal was met with a sense of loss.

Dickinson and Erben proceed with a description of the research study ey conducted with seventeen participants who provided written descripns of a nostalgic experience. Key themes in the rich qualitative data in*de the natural world, freedom and adventure, nurturance and love, quietude d regularity*, and *release of tension*. The authors share lengthy excerpts from e narrative data that illustrate these key themes and, in so doing, also make e case for the role of nostalgia in the development of the self over time. oreover, their interpretation of the data suggests that nostalgia is a promient emotion in establishing a moral perspective. The nostalgic episodes the search participants describe highlight the significance of interpersonal reationships, as the memories they recall typically feature not only themselves protagonists but also family members, friends, or intimate partners. The perience of nostalgia can be said to be valuable at the personal, interperonal, and social level. As Dickinson and Erben state, "Nostalgic memories n become part of an emotional stock from which we may show sympathetic derstanding and express appreciations of the development of selfhood in ers" (86). This capacity of nostalgia has also been noted in other research. r example, Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut, and Denise Baden have nducted numerous studies that support the claim that nostalgia can be benficial to the self and others, as nostalgia bolsters a sense of meaning, stimuates gratitude, enhances connections with others, and promotes altruism.

As is the case generally with qualitative research, a limitation in Dickinson and Erben's study is the lack of generalizability, but given the larger body related research on nostalgia, their findings are consistent with the findings

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in other such studies. In this way, their research supports claims about key properties of nostalgia—properties that cast nostalgia in a much more positive (even beneficial) light than original notions of nostalgia as disease.

In summary, Dickinson and Erben's book provides an excellent overview of the nature of nostalgia. From the backdrop of discussing the early medical conception of nostalgia, the authors trace differing meanings of the concept over time with a particular focus on sociological conceptions that feature nostalgia as a phenomenon characterized by loss and acceptance. The authors also follow how nostalgia plays an important role in the development of the self over time. The authors consider literary depictions of nostalgia that highlight its two key aspects—that of romanticizing the past while also mourning its passing. This consideration sets the stage for the contemporary understanding of nostalgia as a bittersweet emotion. Dickinson and Erben present findings from their empirical investigation of nostalgia that further highlight the role of nostalgia in constructing and maintaining the self. The narrative data the authors collected demonstrate the ways in which individuals recall the past, juxtapose memories with the present, and derive meaning that is both personally beneficial for their own development while also proving to be potentially beneficial beyond themselves due to the social context in which past events are remembered and the role of other people in these memories.

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Janelle L. Wilson

In Haste with Aloha: Letters and Diaries of Queen Emma 1881–1885. Selected and edited by David W. Forbes. U of Hawai'i P, 2017. 256 pp. ISBN 978-0824857837, $45.00.

Hawai'i historian David W. Forbes has once again produced a book of interest and importance, this time centering on Dowager Queen Emma's writings from 1881–1885, the last five years of her life, starting eighteen years after the death of her husband, King Kamehameha IV. One may think Queen Emma played no part in Hawai'i's history other than founding—with her

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husband—what is today the Queen's Medical Center and the (Anglican) Cathedral of St. Andrew, but her daily life shows a woman of many abilities and accomplishments. A well-educated and worldly woman of privilege with several homes and numerous servants, she nevertheless willingly "pitched in" when needed, and also enjoyed a good gossip.

The book title refers to letters written in a hurry in order to get them on appropriate ships in time for scheduled departures. Most of her correspondence goes to outer islands. The most extensive are to Flora Wood Jones (called "Ihilani") on Maui, the daughter of a couple from Massachusetts. The two women shared church and school interests, plus Flora married an Englishman who taught French at the Anglican St. Alban's school, later 'Iolani School. Other Maui correspondents were Julia Hubbell Akana and Elizabeth ("Lizzie") Nahaolelua. Another favorite receiver of Emma's letters was Jane ("Jenny") Stillman of Kohala. Emma nearly always had permanent house-guests, young part-Hawaiian girls whom she helped educate, shepherding them through society and helping them find good husbands. Interestingly she often refers to Hawaiians as "natives," as if she weren't one herself, plus there are the usual references of the time to her "China boy cook" and "Chinaman gardeners."

Chapter one provides Emma's family history (which explains her mainly British upbringing), and chapter two tells of her concerns regarding the smallpox epidemic of 1881. Brought aboard ships from San Francisco and Canton, Emma mentions half a dozen cases of the disease discovered at the Commercial Hotel located directly across the street from her home, Rooke House, located on Nu'uanu Street, which is bounded by Beretania and Bethel Streets and Chaplain Lane. (Rooke was the last name of her English physician adoptive father.) Then two of Emma's servants and some residents of Dr. Rooke's nearby first home were diagnosed and taken to Kaholaloa Hospital (which was situated on a reef island in Honolulu harbor and used as a quarantine station). Within days, Rooke House itself was quarantined. Emma is soon patching, mending, and renovating some of her old clothes for the female patients at the hospital. She sent three "great bundles of things": twenty holoku (floor-length gowns), five night dresses, six chemises, three petticoats, six stockings, one pea jacket, and two waterproof wrappers. Another bundle of linens, rags, and towels were sent to the then-named Queen's Hospital. At one point her gate is left open and she is admonished by Dr. Ferdinand W. Hutchison that too many people are going in and out; the gates must be kept closed, locked, and marked with yellow warning flags. More servants are sent to the quarantine station.

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Emma keeps track of everyone connected to both houses while also living a daily life of gardening, rearranging her jewelry—during which she finds her deceased son's piko, or umbilical cord, traditionally retained after the birth of a child, along with her deceased grandfather John Young's two last teeth—and learning to play tennis from a book. And eating. Emma enjoyed food: for breakfast (often at 11:00 AM as she liked to stay up late playing cards with her guests and servants) she might have oysters and poi. Late evenings were always a good time for ice cream. Her friend Jenny Stillman Smythe said in 1940 that while Emma loved cooked breadfruit, she ate most anything that was set before her and often made her own salad dressing. In her country home at Pu'uloa meals were often taken sitting on the floor with the various workers, eating raw fish and poi with her fingers, but at Rooke House only those she chose were allowed to eat with her, usually only Jenny Stillman and Lucy Peabody. The widowed Emma lived quietly, never giving formal dinners, but generally celebrated her birthday with a lū'au.

Lucy Peabody was especially close to Emma, being a cousin, a confidante, and a lady-in-waiting. Her haole father was a physician from New York, while her Hawaiian mother had an impressive background, including Hawai'i Island chiefs and Americans close to King Kamehameha I. Lucy was prominent in Emma's royal court, and even after Emma's death Lucy continued to represent Emma in various services to the Hawaiian community.

Emma writes of excursions to other islands, of lū'au, of dances, of balls, of weddings, of King Kalākaua, whom she didn't care for due to their political rivalry for the throne in 1874, and a great deal about her gardening, both at Pu'uloa, and Rooke House. In 1883 she mentions setting out "400 Cocoanut and Algoroba trees in two acres of ground by the sea," which she hopes will grow. Emma reports a rumor in 1882 that Mrs. Dominis (later Queen Lili'uokalani) is possibly pregnant ("is that not real news?"), which was not true. In 1884 Emma worries about Bernice Pauahi Bishop having had breast cancer surgery in San Francisco and discusses the popularity of a newly erected small merry-go-round on Queen Street. She enjoyed camping on various islands with her woman friends, once camping in Kohala on Hawai'i Island and another time spending a week in a fern shelter at the head of Mānoa Valley.

After apparently having had a small stroke in 1883 Emma had another more serious one, on August 13, 1884, while visiting friends in Kohala. Although originally left in a critical and semi-conscious condition, she was soon returned to Honolulu and taken by stretcher to Rooke House. After a lengthy recuperation, Emma attended St. Andrew's Days services on November 30 and "returned thanks for her recovery from her late severe illness," according to an article in the December 6, 1884, issue of the *Anglican Church Chronicle*

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...th. Her final letters were to newlyweds Jenny Stillman and her husband, ...ney Smythe, who had moved to Kohala, and they still contained animat... ...ecurs from Honolulu and questions about people and activities in various ...ts of life. Emma's last letter—to Jenny—was dated April 21, 1885, four ...s before she died at nearly fifty, having suffered three more strokes. In it ...e told of a new arbor being built at Rooke House, going with friends to ...oloa, and that her dog "Cheeky" had birthed pups in her bathroom laying ...top of some coconut bags.

The April 27, 1885, *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* report of Emma's death ...tioned her "exalted character and virtues," adding that she had become ...ery corpulent and abstained from taking exercise" (142). Forbes adds that ...r. Robert McKibbin, Jr., one of Emma's physicians, said to an *Advertis*... ...ewsman that a police guard had been placed at the entrance to Rooke ...use, flags around the city were placed at half-mast, and businesses were ...sed. St. Andrew's Priory school issued a formal statement regarding the loss ...their "Good Queen." A solemn and elaborate formal funeral, described in ...tail in chapter eleven of the book, followed.

An unsigned letter from the Priory dated April 30, 1885, and first pub...shed in *The Banner of Faith* (London) in July 1885, and reprinted in Hawai'i ...the *Anglican Church Chronicle* on October 3, 1885, ends with the com...ment, "She was every thing to her people, and it is hardly exaggeration to use ...e poetical language of the Hawaiians and say that it seems as if the sun had ...ased to shine" (148).

Forbes gives an extensive overview of Queen Emma's life in his introduc...on, explaining that now, 130 years after her death, she is still a presence in ...awai'i, commemorated by her hospital; her home in Nu'uanu, now a mu...eum; a school, a street, and a square, all bearing her name; and her large col...ection of Hawaiian possessions in the Bishop Museum. Although much of ...e earlier correspondence was published in two books by Alfons Korn, the ...etters in the present collection are published for the first time.

If one reads no other books about Queen Emma, this selection of her ...etters and diary entries showing royal social life and customs in nineteenth-...entury Hawai'i will provide readers intimate details about the life of this ...allowed, indomitable, "everyday" queen. Forbes has included extensive chap...r notes at the end of the book, many of which are interesting reading on ...eir own. Emma's February 22, 1883, letter to Flora Jones tells of Cabi...et member John M. Kapena making a decision causing alarm to merchants ...nd wealthy people who have funds in the government treasury. In his note, ...Forbes tells of Kapena's stormy marriage, due to his intemperance, of Kape... ...to Emma Malo, the daughter of historian David Malo. Once Minister of

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Finance and Governor of Maui, Kapena's nineteen-year-old daughter Alexandrina petitioned the court in 1887 to have him placed under guardianship for his "excessive drinking and debauchery" and having wasted his estate, exposing her to "want and suffering" (176n53).

In another note, Forbes describes an 1882 brief description of a visit to Emma at Rooke House from American artist Joseph D. Strong and his wife Isobel. They were shown into a large old-fashioned drawing room containing heavy mahogany furniture. Forbes quotes from Isobel's memoir, *This Life I've Loved*, in which she reports, "The Queen looked a lonely figure in the far end of the room sitting on a sofa by the light of a single oil lamp." She was dressed in black, "her holoku sweeping in a long train behind her" (195n89). In reply to Isobel's question about a "large, strange object in the hall" Emma explained it was the ornate silver christening font sent to Emma by Queen Victoria for Emma's son Albert Edward, born in 1858. It was used just before the little prince of Hawai'i died in 1862. Forbes has rewarded readers of both the book and the notes with fascinating glimpses into a particular period of Hawai'i's past.

Riánna M. Williams

Tamar S. Hess. *Self as Nation: Contemporary Hebrew Autobiography*. Brandeis UP, 2016, 213 pp. ISBN 978-1611688801, $40.00.

To those of us interested in the lives of others, Hebrew autobiographies, whether written before or after the establishment of the State of Israel, have often been disappointing because so many of these texts have been rooted, as Tamar Hess rightly notes, in collective national life. In her introduction to *Self as Nation*, Hess shows how Hebrew autobiography since the mid-nineteenth century has followed the path familiar to other national literatures in which the individual self has been subjected to the national narrative. The autobiographer may celebrate the Jews' settlement in a new home or express disillusionment with the Zionist project, but that project overwhelms all dimensions of life, especially in men's life writing. Autobiographies written by women are often more concerned with personal agonies, such as the betrayal of women pioneers by fellow men settlers, but the focal point remains on the collective effort.

Hess analyzes a handful of autobiographical works by Israeli writers of different backgrounds and life experiences. These include Yoram Kaniuk and Netiva Ben-Yehuda, whose post-traumatic accounts of their experiences in the war of 1948 are soaked in blood and tears; Nathan Zach and Haim Be- whose autobiographical selves are formed in relation to dying mothers; and

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Baghdad-born Shimon Balas and the Holocaust survivor Aharon Appel-
whose life stories represent two aspects of the immigrant experience in
el. Since autobiography allows silenced voices to confront hegemonic ide-
gies and marginal groups to renegotiate their relationship with the social
ext, it is not surprising that all the writers analyzed here have taken criti-
moral stands that challenge the Israeli collective. According to the author,
wever, they have also continued to assert a commitment to that collective.
r example, Kaniuk's narration of the 1948 war reflects both a personal and
llective trauma, and in her discussion of autobiographies by Esther Raab
d other women Hess states that these writings offer a point of departure for
itical meetings of individual identities with the national collective.

Self as Nation thus reaffirms a common conception about Israeli identity
cording to which the self and the nation cannot be separated even in an era
which literature focuses on the individual and society is split. As Hess puts
"At a period marked by the splintering of Israeli society by ethnicity, class,
nder, and religion, Israeli autobiography has become increasingly drawn to
llective symbols and cultural tropes" (164). This statement is supported,
r example, by an autobiographical sketch written by literary scholar Ariel
rschfeld, whose older brother was killed in the 1948 war. Hirschfeld tells of
s brother's portrait that hung above his cradle, which understandably played
role in his identity formation. Hess, however, does not allow this episode to
main within the private sphere of a family who had suffered a terrible loss.
ther, "the national circumstances that underpin his older brother's death
event it from being exclusively private, thus framing the memoir in relation
both spheres—the public and the private, the individual and the national—
separably and at once" (154).

Here lies what I consider the book's main shortcoming: the assumption
at the individual voice of Israeli writers "clearly represents the national, just
the national is the plain on which individual Israeli identities are inscribed,
d can formulate themselves" (155). This assumption is not necessarily con-
rmed by the autobiographies discussed here but seems to stem from the fact
at the author is admittedly less concerned with the persons who wrote them
an with the ways in which their self-representations construct their iden-
ties. Thus, when novelist Haim Be'er, who grew up in a Jewish orthodox
me in Jerusalem, tells of the alienation his parents felt toward officials of
e Ministry of Rationing and Supply who enforced the government's auster-
y policy in the 1950s, it makes sense that Hess ties that alienation to Jewish
ople's traditional fear of ruthless institutions that had endangered them in
e past. However, there is little to suggest that Be'er created such narratives
rt of an attempt to shape and delineate his relationship with Israeli na-

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This suggestion is based on a notion, prevalent among some literary scholars, that there exists a coherent, homogeneous literary core in Israel that could be threatened by Be'er's life writing or, for that matter, by any autobiography written at the margins. The distinction between the core and the margins, however, must be reconsidered and the hybrid nature of Israeli culture recognized. Be'er's orthodox family may not have identified with the Israeli establishment at the time, but orthodox families were a major piece of the puzzle that composed Israel's national identity. So was Kaniuk, the compulsive outsider, who was seen, mainly by himself, as a marginal novelist but whose fiction contributed a great deal to the ways in which Israelis came to realize their post-traumatic state following the 1948 war and the wars that followed. The literary works by the Baghdad-born Ballas and the Holocaust survivor Appelfeld were often contrasted to an imagined Israeli literary canon, but Israeli identity has been shaped as much by these two authors as by what Hess defines as representatives of the hegemony—that is, European-born men who are neither immigrants nor Holocaust survivors.

Here lies perhaps the main lesson to take away from this book: Israeli autobiographies are enlightening not because they adapt the private to the public, the individual to the collective, and the self to the nation but because the people presenting themselves in all their concerns, fears, and weaknesses are the real building blocks of Israeli society.

Michael Keren

Eva Hesse. *Diaries*. Edited by Barry Rosen with assistance from Tamara Bloomberg, Yale UP in association with Hauser & Wirth, 2016, 904 pp. ISBN 978-0300185508, $25.95.

When a brain tumor ended her life in 1970, the artist Eva Hesse was just thirty-four years old. But, as this book's promotional materials state, Hesse was (and remains) one of the greatest American artists of the 1960s, on par with the other artists these diaries name as part of her social and professional circle, including Dan Graham, Sol Lewitt, Mel Bochner, and Robert Smithson (who also died young, in a plane crash). This contrast between her life's fleetingness and her reputation's durability mirrors the disparity between her art's ephemerality and this book's sturdiness. Works like her well-known *Hang Up* (1966)—a wall piece comprising steel tube, cord, cloth, and wood that plays fun at the solipsism of many 1960s paintings—seem ready to fall apart. Not this compendium of Hesse's complete dairies, with its squat format and thick spine, looks solid as a brick—an impression highlighted by its cover's sandpapery feel and dark rust color.

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But does the book's painstaking editing by Barry Rosen (her estate's artistic advisor) and attractive production enrich our understanding of Hesse's life, work, or epoch? This query is especially pointed given that Yale University Press already, in 2007, published a facsimile edition of her date books from 1960 and 1965 and that throughout this volume's 900 pages, Hesse says little about her art, concentrating instead on her illnesses, her experiences with psychotherapy, and, most prominently, her stormy marriage to sculptor Tom Doyle. Are we better off for having this material? Do we profit from reading Hesse's innermost thoughts, insecurities, and anxieties?

Arguing for the prosecution, we might say that we don't. For instance, her repeated references to Doyle's mistress as "0" (that is, zero) only diminish Hesse—as in, while recounting a dream from July 1966: "T + 0 are still together, plan to marry" (648). Similarly, is anything advanced by knowing that, having lost her mother to divorce and then suicide while a young girl, Hesse is hit hard when her father dies in August 1966, essentially orphaning her at thirty years old (697)? And even such discussions of her art as do appear here are intermittent and perfunctory: lists of materials, possible titles of works, brief comments about sales or upcoming shows. But that's it. To be fair, we do see her gradual transition from painter to sculptor—though we learn nothing about the shift's motivations. Rather, we see this change at one remove, as her occasional notes about her artistic practice morph from comments on painting. For example, on October 28, 1964, Hesse states, "I will paint against every rule I or others have invisible [*sic*] placed" (285).[1] Later, in fall 1966, she writes a note about sculpture: "*New piece / black / 4 x 4 board / holes / rubber hose papier mâché" (715). The reasons for exchanging two dimensions for three remain obscure, and one might wonder if whatever we're left with just encourages what art historian T. J. Clark calls "idiot X-equals-Y biography" in the opening pages of *Picasso and Truth* (4). Perhaps it does, which prompts a further question: shouldn't some archival material stay in the archives (in this instance, at Oberlin College)? Again, perhaps. But poring through materials with no overt link to Hesse's art may yet have value. The defense may not have a slam-dunk case, but that doesn't mean it has no case at all.

For instance, insight into her frustration and pain around the situation with Doyle might well matter. Despite the picture we have of the 1960s as a time when struggles for gender equality, including sexual experience, gathered steam, the truth is different. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, articulating the vexation and unhappiness that many women felt as housewives, was only published in 1963. William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson's *Human Sexual Response* didn't appear until 1966, and Germaine Greer's *The*

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Female Eunuch, with its argument that the social condition of women alienates them from their sexuality, came out in 1970. Far from being a time when an awareness of gender inequality bore fruit, the 1960s were a decade when this awareness started to emerge—mostly among women.

Men, in the meantime, seemed to feel that sexual liberation meant *male* sexual liberation and took that as licence to run roughshod over any notions of sensitivity or empathy. In other words, men carried on—in more ways than one—as before, while women worked out on their own what professional and sexual agency might mean for them. And while we're used to thinking of the art world as progressive and enlightened, the record suggests otherwise. Consider, for example, how Judy Chicago, in *Beyond the Flower*, recounts experiencing the same abuse of trust with her husband while, from the other side, Larry Rivers describes his own philandering in *What Did I Do?*. That is not to say that everyone from that era records such an experience: there's little about sexuality and nothing about such unfaithfulness in sculptor Anne Truitt's *Daybook* or, to move outside the realm of visual art to culture more generally, in Agatha Christie's *An Autobiography*.

If, however, some people got through the 1960s in one piece, many others experienced that time as one of considerable frustration, as the promise of emancipation bumped up against the reality of old habits dying hard and the complexities of romantic relationships turned out to reflect in miniature how things went in the world at large. Here is Hesse describing a September weekend in 1966 spent with art-world luminaries like Smithson, Graham, Bochner, and Lewitt (who has or had a crush on her) and the dealer Virginia Dwan:

> Tonight again, same crew. Dinner at Smithsons. I am again non-artist, amongst Virginia. Same position. They all forget me when it comes down to talking. This includes Sol, yes, loyal Sol. He neglects me solidly. With Virginia I too am forgotten. Yes, Even Sol. (706)

"Non-artist" equals non-person, which equation links the apparently epiphenomenal musings of Hesse's diaries with the thing that brought us here in the first place: her influential art career. Significant though her career turned out to be, this quotation shows that she experienced it differently. Even among friends, she struggled to be recognized as a sentient human being with things to say, let alone as a sophisticated artist (her diaries are peppered with references to the literature of the day: Henry Miller, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer), while those peers seemed to move effortlessly from strength to strength, socially and artistically. As she understands, the evidence strongly suggests that the difference is her gender.

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And if this problem wasn't unique to Hesse during her moment, it also did not emerge from nowhere. A brief scan of art's historiographies shows that this structural misogyny always plagued both the mainstream and avant-garde communities (two classics—Linda Nochlin's "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" and Lora Rempel's "The Anti-Body in Photomontage" about the Dadaist Hannah Höch—are enough to show that), as does a glance at Marie Bashkirtseff's diaries from the late nineteenth century. Hesse expresses the same frustration about differences in opportunities, so that even though 1950s art schools no longer have a policy against admitting women, the context is similar. And in that context, as Tamar Garb said about Bashkirtseff, what else would a bright, ambitious young woman repeatedly stymied in her efforts to get a fair shake from the art world write about other than her experience? Unlike a contemporary such as the painter Gerhard Richter, Hesse never could title her notebooks *The Daily Practice of Painting* because she could not assume that she would paint (or sculpt) every day.

This difference brings out the ideological value of Hesse's focus on her context: coded as feminine, the everyday is both the location and source of her frustration. The resistance that she and other women experienced (and continue to experience) is part of the condition in which she worked, and by recording that condition in her diaries, she reinscribes herself into the femininity that limits her art-world mobility. Here, her diaries do link to her art, since what is the softness, the vague organic-ness, of a piece like *Hang* if not other than the feminization of Minimalism's insistent, masculinist hardness? Beyond that, if Nancy K. Miller is right that we read autobiographies for how their authors differ from us, might we also read diaries for how their authors resemble us? Might we take comfort in seeing the most gifted among us struggle with the quotidian, worry about the dentist, obsess about affairs of the heart? Is there existential value in the potential for empathy that these shared concerns set up between us and these denizens of the firmament, in the demystifying that comes from learning that Homer not only nods but also farts, shits, and vomits?

Of course, the story has another side, as we see in Marcie Begleiter's documentary *Eva Hesse*, released roughly contemporaneously with this book. Begleiter's film dwells briefly on the difficulties of Hesse's relationship with Doyle and her feelings of marginalization (and includes some salutary comments by art critic Lucy Lippard about Hesse's feminizing of Minimalism), but its overriding sense is that, as one of Hesse's key studio technicians says, "she was just one of the boys." Certainly, while the film is disappointingly clichéd, this contention has some foundation: in her brief life's last five years, she almost could not keep up with the demands for exhibitions; when she died,

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in May 1970, that month's *Artforum* (then as now one of contemporary art's most influential publications) had an interview with her as its cover story. But still. One doubts that Robert Smithson ever felt ignored by Virginia Dwan.

And that doubt is the central term of Hesse's life, art, and reputation. If she were alive today, she'd be in her early eighties and experiencing all of the lionizing that accompanies being a senior artist: major exhibitions with catalogues written by esteemed scholars; extensive collections of personal papers being unearthed, archived, published, and put online. That these things are happening now even though Hesse has been dead for considerably longer than she was alive attests to her contribution's importance.[2] Not really a key to her art, productivity, and anxiety, these diaries rather are annoying, witty, tedious, and poetic. Perhaps like her life, and certainly like her art, their elusiveness is their most substantial quality.

NOTES

1. Here and throughout, the emphasis is in the original.
2. Extensive Eva Hesse archives are online at the Allen Memorial Art Museum's website, http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/EvaHesseArchives.html. I suppose it's a sign of the times that the *Diaries* reviewed here are already available on Google Books. For examples of lionizing exhibition catalogues, see Fer and the publication *Eva Hesse* edited by Sussman.

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Charles Reeve

Helena Michie and Robyn Warhol. *Love Among the Archives: Writing the Lives of Sir George Scharf, Victorian Bachelor*. Edinburgh UP, 2015, 246 pp. ISBN 978-1474406628, $34.95.

WHO IS SIR GEORGE SCHARF?

On a bad day, for Victorianists Helena Michie and Robyn Warhol, he is "the most boring man in the world" (6). For the rest of us—a group that may include scholars of Victorian literature and culture, historians, art critics, artists, and avid readers of biography and biographical metafiction—he is the first director of London's National Portrait Gallery (NPG). Does this storied position, which led to Scharf being appointed a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, differentiating him from his father George Scharf, the German immigrant artist whose vocation the NPG website lists as "miniature painter, draughtsman and lithographer," make Sir George any less boring? Possibly. Although the biography of such a person may be categorized as niche, there are a number of reasons to write a life of Sir George Scharf. Michie and Warhol mention some of these, including Scharf's contributions to portrait identification and display techniques, for example. But out of the authors' self-professed limitations of training—both are literary critics—comes something more ambitious and expansive. Despite its enrichment in Victorian literary scholarship, *Love Among the Archives* belongs to the ever-expanding category of experimental life writing, distinguished by the refusal of prescriptive narratives and the embrace of narrative twists, turns, and surprises. Michie and Warhol's book neatly undresses three characteristic plots in nineteenth-century fiction—the romance plot, the family

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romance, and the search for vocation—as the plots enable and inform the experience of working with Scharf's archive. Although the specific application of these plots will be most interesting to scholars of nineteenth-century literature, those reading and working more broadly in the field of biography will appreciate the book's attention to everyday details that might otherwise fall into obscurity, resisting narrative altogether. A torn piece of waistcoat, a blotch on a letter, a meticulously preserved set of dinner menus—these things all come to life and have their place in the authors' search for a subject who refuses complete knowability.

Love Among the Archives deftly employs three temporal modes to bring Scharf's experiences to life: story time, discourse time, and archive time (51). A story, as Michie and Warhol point out, links events through causation, and Scharf's diaries seldom provide evidence for *why* certain entries appear side by side, and even less evidence for what Scharf might have been feeling when he recorded them. Story time, as such, follows the narrative(s) that the authors have imagined and constructed for Scharf, based on what they intuit from their own experiences with his papers; it is not linear or chronological. Those needing a more organized chronology can look to the vita provided before the preface, which is divided into the seven decades of Scharf's life (as with the book as a whole, the vita does not end with Scharf's death, but unlike the book, the vita ends with the relocation of the NPG collection to its current space, and thus asserts Scharf's professional legacy). The vita merges Michie and Warhol's story time observations with events that might structure a more chronologically driven account of Scharf's life, such as Charles Dickens's private visit to the NPG in 1861. Next to events such as these are story time occurrences like "the piano wars," a set of occasions where Scharf attempts to drown out a neighbor's loud piano-playing with noisemaking of his own. Reading the vita emphasizes how story time events signify within the archivists' reconstruction of Scharf's Victorian bachelor world, rather than on their own terms—on Scharf's terms, that is. Discourse time refers to recursive moments in Scharf's diaries and letters, including daily records, mentions of memorial anniversaries, and summaries of annual expenditures and professional accomplishments. The third category, archive time, encompasses Michie and Warhol's fifteen years of research, their love story with the archival Scharf written as a series of detective stories (53). The authors use their first names to emphasize disagreement or discoveries originally made on an independent basis; most of the sections in archival time are focalized through a unified "we." The authors' careful description of their method in the introduction enables them to use speculation and fantasy as tools, to present their exhilaration with the archive's holdings as a means of grappling with

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the discoveries and disappointments it has in store, and they offer the visceral phrase "archival deflation" to describe those moments when the archive does not yield to their search (67).

These discoveries are at their most exhilarating in the book's second chapter, "Reading for Romance: The Marriage Plot." Having encountered Scharf's archive by chance, in the process of researching Victorian food, Michie and Warhol move from Scharf's large album of dinner invitations and menus to his diaries, to try to make sense of Scharf's list-making mind. Scharf's diaries are unremarkable in everything but their commitment to detail; many are even written in uniform-looking, preprinted diary booklets, rectangular like money-holding gift cards. Indeed, it's in the exchange of gifts that the authors begin to search for meaningful connections in Scharf's circle of friends and acquaintances. Even after he began receiving a comfortable salary as secretary of the NPG in 1857 (Scharf did not become director of the institution until 1882), Scharf took on minor debts and settled accounts with his male dining companions. One of these men, Jack Pattisson, twenty-one years younger than Scharf and from a large, middle-class family, was to become Scharf's volunteer assistant. Although Pattisson did not receive a salary from Scharf, the two men worked in close quarters and attended social functions together, and Scharf seems to have particularly appreciated Pattisson's support on the day of his mother's funeral. If there's nothing here to explicitly suggest a "gay love plot," one of several descriptors Michie and Warhol try out for Pattisson and Scharf's close relationship, there's nothing to establish circumstances to the contrary, either. The authors decide upon "romance plot" to refer to their own archival quest to determine, however imperfectly, the nature of the intimacy between George and Jack. They retain "the marriage plot," however, "for those moments when the plotting involves compulsory heterosexuality" (68). Strategically linking plot types to the temporalities of story, discourse, and archive, Michie and Warhol wisely avoid superimposing the gay love plot upon the marriage plot. Equally important, they avoid declaring Scharf and Pattisson's relationship a fully unknowable mystery. It's impossible to read this chapter without recognizing a bond between the two men that deserves to be honored in whatever form it existed and wherever it existed: in the gaps, the silences.

Love Among the Archives reminds us that reading for the plot can lead one astray in search of a story without closure, but it can also show a researcher where next to turn. In a brilliant moment of reversal, the authors reveal that the marriage plot has its uses after all. George Scharf and Jack Pattisson were not to live together indefinitely; Jack married the daughter of a Member of Parliament, Ellen Miller, with whom there apparently had been

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an understanding long before Scharf entered the picture. On their separate but intertwined paths, Warhol and Michie retrace Pattisson's appearance in Scharf's diaries and letters, expecting that at some point Jack would have to share the news of his impending nuptials with George—irrespective of whether a document confirming this suspicion existed. When Michie *does* find the document, a letter from Jack to George that begins with the line "Don't be shocked," the narrative buildup to this moment lets the reader share in a revelation that melds the researcher's excitement with what very convincingly feels like Scharf's shock, and potential dismay (92). Where a different kind of biographical project might have sought to extrapolate Scharf's feelings upon receiving Pattisson's letter, Michie and Warhol's narrative lets the reader interpret the letter along with Scharf, in a striking gesture of cross-temporal understanding. The authors describe this moment as both a kind of consummation and a dashing of their hopes for the future of Scharf and Pattisson's relationship; at the same time, they realize that Scharf's diaries and letters are "texts that deman[d] to be read in the same way we had been trained to read" (97). The readings with and against the grain of the marriage plot performed in this chapter are exemplary. They treat primary sources with great sensitivity, getting us as close to knowing Scharf, or a version of Scharf, as we ever will in the book without pigeonholing his feelings. (Hearteningly, Scharf did not die alone. After Jack Pattisson, he maintained his friendships; one of the steadiest of these was with another younger man, Freeman O'Donoghue, a cataloger at the British Museum.)

Chapter three, "Reading for Differentiation: The Family Romance Plot," is no less thoughtful and thorough than its predecessor, although there are more pieces for Michie and Warhol to sort through as they work to incorporate the Scharf family diaries. In this chapter, archive time and story time feel less smoothly integrated, as the authors acknowledge they focused their attention on the romance plot before turning to the divergent professional narratives of George Scharf Sr. and his son. Although this approach makes sense for the researchers, as a reading experience, it is initially disorienting. The inconclusiveness surrounding the Scharf family—which includes Sir George's father and mother, his aunt, and an absent actor brother, Henry—is somehow less satisfying than that which determines the authors' discussion of Jack Pattisson. No doubt this partially has to do with the type of plot they examine in this chapter, as uncertain family relationships create more complicated narrative challenges. Rather than offer a bildungsroman story of the son's becoming successful independently of his father, Michie and Warhol show that the father came to depend economically on his son. How this happened is unclear; although George Scharf Sr. worked regularly as a scientific illustrator,

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s working as the assistant of George Jr. by 1852 (129). Although the au-
find evidence that the elder Scharf was proud of his son, their relation-
may have been strained. In 1856, following a period of ill health (hem-
ids, to be precise, in keeping with the authors' full disclosure of George
odily suffering), George Jr. moved from Bloomsbury to Camden with
other and aunt, leaving his father to take separate lodgings and becom-
e de facto head of the household. The narrative of differentiation be-
with displacement. The uneasy feeling one gets from reading about the
ionship between father and son in this chapter may not only have to do
leaving the "sexier story" of Jack behind but with turning from the gift
omy that operated to George Jr.'s advantage within his circle of acquain-
s toward the burden of debt on the Scharfs (119).

By focusing this chapter primarily on a single year of financial difficulty in
Scharf household, 1856–1857, the authors make their case for horizontal
ative—that is, a way of telling the family's story that does not depend on
generational progress. Not only is horizontal narrative an alternative to
ildungsroman, but it is also "a synchronic narrative in which multiple
y members are doing things and writing about them at the same time"
. Michie and Warhol offer comparisons between the account books of
r and son, which show that George Jr.'s personal obligations and profes-
ally connected pleasures were in conflict. But as with the romance chap-
the authors' focus on emotional economies—even when the meaning of
ific affective transactions must remain uncertain—is what really stands
here. We are introduced to the recurring anniversary of Mrs. Scharf's
eral in chapter two; in chapter three, that event contrasts starkly with Sir
ge's complete silence on the matter of his father's death. Michie and
hol find no evidence that Scharf even attempted to attend his father's fu-
l (and by that time, the elder Scharf was living with his wife and sister-in-
once again), an absence that rightly strikes them as odd, given the impor-
e of memorializing the dead in Victorian culture. When Mrs. Scharf dies
ost ten years later, they note a new consciousness in the diary entry, one
affirms George Jr.'s differentiated identity as Sir George through his sim-
ignature of "GS." This entry links Scharf's parents, separate but together,
the initials Sir George used on his portraits and sketches, enabling him
ert his unique identity while memorializing Mrs. Scharf. The scantiness
ecord leaves neither Scharf parent much to say in this chapter—only spare
y entries—but the richness of the readings Michie and Warhol extract
these entries attests to the value of mundane records in elucidating the
plexity of family networks.

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The fourth and final chapter, "Reading for Success: The Professional Plot," looks at Scharf's visits to the English country houses Knole and Chevening to ask how he would have been received by their loftily titled occupants. These collectors and patrons, the Sackvilles and Stanhopes, respectively, were presumably interested in Scharf's contributions as an authority on portraiture (no specific reason for the visits is ever determined). But did Scharf's professional title gain him the status of distinguished guest—perhaps even friend? The authors state that the purpose of this chapter is to determine Scharf's class position, a query that bears some weight, given that the introduction mentions the suggestions of their historian colleagues to deal with Scharf "as representative, as a figure who would tell us about bachelor life in Victorian London, about mid-century immigrant experience, about the complications of class identification among urban professionals" (40). Michie and Warhol freely admit that they have split the difference; for them, Scharf is not representative but exceptional, the object of their banal but deep affection as researchers. The second and third chapters turn this affection toward some truly illuminating readings of the archival material, and as a result there is something in each one for the reader who may persist in finding Scharf an unremarkable person. The final chapter has less to offer such readers; even Michie and Warhol find themselves unimpressed by Scharf's skills as a portrait arranger and authenticator. As a result, we never learn just how important Scharf's professional ventures were or weren't during his tenure at the NPG. The "professional plot" also proves to be a less useful phrase for describing Scharf's relationships with the Sackvilles at Knole and with Lord Stanhope at Chevening. In both cases, Scharf appears to have been welcomed during his visits to these grand houses as "an extra man" (170), but what the visits suggest about the intersection of Scharf's professional and personal lives is, in the end, unclear.[1]

After finishing *Love Among the Archives*, I find that I still cannot explain who George Scharf really was. This frustrates me because of my own narrative longings, but also because the book, on a number of occasions, made me feel the serendipity of discovery that can only come from preparing not to be surprised by old, forgotten papers that have become intimately known. Surely this feeling has to be connected to something—to someone. And yet this kind of longing has its consequences, too. I was reminded of Alexander Masters's *A Life Discarded: 148 Diaries Found in the Trash*, which is shaped much more by the biographer's presence on the levels of story and discourse than *Love Among the Archives*, but which is equally interested in how plots can shape the research process. Masters's subject, a prolific and entirely ordinary female diarist, spends part of her life working as a housekeeper for an aging Cambridge professor, whom she describes as her "gaoler" (72). As Masters searches

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…s about the woman's identity, he begins to construct an imprisonment …king the diarist's story at various points with gothic romance (73), the …ers of Dickens (102), Victorian domestic servitude, and George Mer… …s long poem *Modern Love* (236). Someone, Masters is convinced, must …ge the impassioned woman from achieving her ambitions. Even with …k of achievement made visible by her diaries (and it's this lack that fas… …s Masters, in contrast to the success story that Warhol and Michie trace) …'s subject, like Scharf, has connections to more than one grand old … This might well lead us to think of abjection, thwarted inheritances, …ss anxiety. But the truth forces Masters to relinquish this plot. With… …closing the secrets of the book further, one is left with the question of …er it is better to have others explain us, or to try to explain ourselves.

I don't think *Love Among the Archives* tries to do either, with respect to …f. And I am in general agreement with Michie and Warhol's sugges… …hat Scharf did not conceive of his diaries as objects in an archive (211). …f it seems fair to say, never tried to be anything other than what he was, …e sense of deliberately exploring alternative identities through writing. …th many a subject of Victorian biography, his life was his work. But if it …times takes work to appreciate the imaginative and scholarly book that …ions many possible lives for this confirmed bachelor, that seems to be the … Lives that begin with the assertion that they are not biographies (49) …work to do if they are going to justify their focus on a single human sub… …with whom even specialized audiences are likely to be unfamiliar. Del… …g some of that work to readers, by inviting them to experience the joys …eflations of the archive in real time, may just be a form of biographical …entiation unto itself.

NOTE

The reader's tolerance for minutiae is also tested in this chapter, as in the line "For the …st time in the written history of his relationship with Scharf, Stanhope tells a joke" …0).

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Amanda Kotch

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Gillian Whitlock. *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions*. Oxford UP, 2015, 284 pp. ISBN 978-0199560622, $31.95.

Gillian Whitlock's *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions* in the Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literatures series brings together two approaches to literary studies that have met different fates over the last decade. Interest in all forms of life writing has grown, especially in a present global politics in which issues of referentiality, "fake news," and truth-telling become ever more urgently debated. Postcolonial studies as a conceptual framework has, in contrast, waned, and been partially eclipsed by a growing if parallel focus on world literature and translation studies.

Given these developments, and indeed the potential limitlessness of postcolonial life writing as a topic, Whitlock makes a number of strategic decisions. She focuses on prose and filmic narratives and, as her subtitle indicates, the question of testimony, reading a series of texts that testify, or that are made to testify, through the lens of postcolonial criticism and theory. Particularly welcome is Whitlock's stress on contexts of activism and dissemination, including paratexts, and her detailed exploration of the transactional nature of life narratives and the affective responses they solicit from audiences. Whitlock consciously opposes the term "life narrative" to "autobiography," which she sees as associated with "western Enlightenment values," in order to pay attention to different genres of life writing—"for example the slave narrative, women's journals and diaries, letters, memoirs, biographies" (3)—that offer other insights into subjectification. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Whitlock is careful to analyze and critique the economies of affect in which such texts participate, while also holding out the hope that such narratives of testimony will "return to the legacy of humanism and continue to invest in its promise, even as they register the limits of its currency and value" (204).

Whitlock's choice of texts for analysis is perhaps more contentious. *Postcolonial Life Narratives* is divided into two sections. The first, entitled "Colonial Testimonial, 1789–1852," consists of six very short chapters, each exploring a single text or a pair of narratives from the period in question. Published narratives that are now canonical have good representation: Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative*, Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince*, and Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*. They are supplemented with, and sometimes juxtaposed to, texts that have a more complex history of genesis and reception—the "Hottentot Venus" Sara (Saartjie) Bartman's testimony, for example, or Woollarawarre Bennelong's letter, the earliest surviving example of writing by an Australian Aboriginal author disseminated in English. The final chapter of this section, entitled "Proximate Reading," elaborates on

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critical method developed in these short chapters and its inspiration: testimony itself as expressed in "postcolonial narratives that emerged *alongside* autobiographical narratives of 'the Western self' and entangled with it, drawing on shared ideoscapes of Enlightenment humanism" (68–69, emphasis original).

The second section of *Postcolonial Life Narratives* consists of four more substantial chapters. A discussion of life writing emerging from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa covers texts by Antjie Krog, Wicomb, and J. M. Coetzee, ultimately focusing on the coauthored text *Was This Goat* that explores the way in which the testimony of one of mothers of a victim of apartheid remains stubbornly unassimilable to the C's goals of healing and reconciliation. This is followed by, for me, the thoughtful chapter in Whitlock's study, which engages in proximate ing to discuss how rape warfare is emplaced within humanitarian narves through bringing together two moments of life writing that occupy timate geographical sites. Accounts of survivors of conflict and genocide the conflict zone on the borders of Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic public of Congo are thus juxtaposed with the proliferation of life writing and Dian Fossey, the "gorilla girl" whose own life stories of encounters primates in Rwanda contain partially erased traces of gendered violence. ticularly powerful here are Whitlock's close readings of Lisa F. Jackson's umentary film *The Greatest Silence*, which elicits and records rape testiny, and the remediation of Fossey's memoirs in Michael Apted's film *Go- in the Mist*, showing what can be articulated and yet also "the limits of manitarian recognition" (129). The third chapter in this section explores igenous testimony, commencing with Sally Morgan's *My Place* and its witing of the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal people in Australia. Whitlock es quickly from textual analysis of the autobiography's "palatability" to on-Aboriginal audience and its imitation of popular genres to an argut for the necessity of grounding the text within larger public processes of timony that are amplified by activism, governmental inquiries, and schol- history. This examination in turn leads to parallels with the experience Indigenous peoples in Canada, and in particular the Canadian Truth and conciliation Commission's hearing that opened up a space for testimony garding Canadian residential schools.

Later in the chapter, Whitlock successfully widens the comparison of Inenous responses to colonial child removal in two settler colonies to other texts—the production of Dalit testimonial narratives in India, and their nnection to "global circuits of exchange" (157) through a series of "multictional networks" that are no longer bound by a center-periphery model

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(164). Whitlock's final chapter in the second part of the book moves to an urgent and pressing contemporary topic: the testimonies of asylum seekers and refugees, and the ways in which such testimony is frequently discounted. Attempts to overcome this disregard, Whitlock argues, often occur through "remediation as fiction" (170). The two texts discussed at length, Edwidge Danticat's *Brother, I'm Dying* and Dave Eggers's *What Is the What* engage critically "with discourses of humanitarian activism" and also ask questions about the possible transformative effects such writing might have on readers (181). In the former, the biographical subject is caught within the parallel world of the US detention center: he cannot speak for himself, but biographical testimony includes bureaucratic documents and the final evidence of his dead body (186), viewed by the niece who assembles the narrative. *What Is the What* creates a fictional archetypal African refugee narrator, yet Eggers uses this fictionality to question the manner in which such narratives become commoditized, trimmed, and planed to fit the expectations of global humanitarian audiences. A brief coda concludes the book, reiterating Whitlock's concern with a renewed humanism.

Postcolonial Life Narratives is both a useful introduction to a topic and an intervention that will provoke future debate and research. As the book is currently written, however, something does seem to have gone missing. Because of the structure Whitlock choses, little attention is given to texts from the long century from the 1860s to the early 1980s, when the formal empires of the industrializing world reached their greatest extent, were then challenged and shattered during the process of decolonization, and when new states struggled with the internal and external legacies of colonial modernity. This period has been central to the evolution of postcolonial studies, and life narratives and testimony were in turn central to it. To be fair to Whitlock, any introductory text needs to be selective. Yet her method of proximate reading would have reaped substantial rewards in looking at the process of translation and reception of a major work such as M. K. Gandhi's *An Autobiography: A Story of My Experiments with Truth* or, with a particular focus on testimony, the genesis and afterlives of Rigoberta Menchú's *I, Rigoberta Menchú*. Inclusion of such texts would have illustrated the development of contestatory humanisms during the twentieth century, as well as the myriad uses of testimony under decolonization—in the colonial courtroom, for example. For this reader at least, a few substantial chapters on texts from different historical moments on a long chronology of colonial modernity would have proven more fruitful than the cluster of brief chapters of the first section of Whitlock's study, which raise interesting questions but are often too short to engage fully with contexts, especially primary sources.

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textual absences are, of course, places for scholarship to inhabit. It is to Brock's credit that *Postcolonial Life Narratives* provides a method of inthat might be expanded to other texts from different historical periods also provokes renewed discussion of the intersections of life writing, tesy, and the ongoing legacy of postcolonial studies.

Philip Holden

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CONTRIBUTORS

Philip Holden is a professor of English at the National University of Singapore. His work in auto/biography studies includes the book *Autobiography and Decolonization: Modernity, Masculinity and the Nation-State* (U Wisconsin P, 2008), and a number of scholarly articles in major scholarly journals such as *Biography*, *Life Writing*, *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, and *Postcolonial Studies*. He has also published widely on Singapore and Southeast Asian literatures, is the coauthor of *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English* (Routledge, 2009), and one of the editors of *Writing Singapore* (NUS Press, 2009), the most comprehensive historical anthology of Singapore literature in English. His short story collection is *Heaven Has Eyes* (Epigram Books, 2016).

Andrew Jewell is a professor in the University Libraries, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and director of the Willa Cather Archive (cather.unl.edu). Andy has published several essays on Willa Cather and other American writers, scholarly editing, and digital humanities. He is coeditor of the books *The American Literature Scholar in the Digital Age* (U of Michigan P, 2011) and *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather* (Knopf, 2013), and is coeditor of the forthcoming digital, scholarly edition, *The Complete Letters of Willa Cather*. Since 2008, Andy has been a member of the Board of Governors of the Willa Cather Foundation.

Michael Keren is a professor emeritus at the University of Calgary and the dean of the School of Communication, Society and Government at the Max Stern Academic College in Israel. He is the author of *Zichroni v. State of Israel: The Biography of a Civil Rights Lawyer* (Lexington Books, 2002).

Amanda Kotch received her PhD in Victorian literature from Rutgers University. She currently teaches at New York University in the Expository Writing Program. Her research focuses on biographies of writers and artists as well as death and material culture.

Jayne Lewis is a professor of English at the University of California, Irvine. She is the author, most recently, of *Air's Appearance: Literary Atmosphere in British Fiction, 1660–1794* (U of Chicago P, 2012) and the editor of *Religion in Enlightenment England* (Baylor, 2016).

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Poletti is an associate professor of English at Utrecht University and Adjunct Research Fellow at Monash University. Her recent work in- *Life Narratives and Youth Culture: Representation, Agency and Participa-* Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), coauthored with Kate Douglas, and articles *Q: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2016), and *a/b: Auto/Biography* She is coeditor of the collection *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Online* (U of Wisconsin P, 2014) with Julie Rak, and author of *Intimate Reading Young Lives in Australian Zine Culture* (Melbourne UP, Her next book, *Biomediations: Writing Ourselves Beyond the Book*, is coming from New York University Press.

Reeve is an associate professor in the faculties of Liberal Arts and and Art at OCAD University, where he also is president of the Fac- Association, and president of the Universities Art Association of Canada. published widely in the fields of modern and contemporary art, with cial emphasis on artists' autobiographies. With Rachel Epp Buller, he editor of *Inappropriate Bodies: Art, Design, and Maternity*, due out from ter Press in 2018.

M. Williams is an independent historian specializing in the Ha- monarchy period. In between the nine years she spent as a docent at Palace and the ten years she has been a docent at Washington Place, conducted research for the late historian H. J. "Jim" Bartels, wrote four three articles for the *Hawaiian Journal of History*, and numerous ar- for various venues, all on Hawaiian history. Riánna has volunteered on off at Bishop Museum library and archives for twenty years, including scribing and indexing the diaries of Queen Emma, Queen Lili'uokalani, the letters of Charles Reed Bishop. She belongs to several historical or- ations and is a life member of the National Society of Arts and Letters.

L. Wilson is a professor in the Department of Anthropology, Soci- and Criminology at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, where she courses in social psychology and deviance. Her research interests in- the sociology of everyday life, nostalgia, and generational identity. She thor of the book *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Bucknell UP, 2005). received her degree in sociology from Western Michigan University.

Zygutis received her PhD in English from the University of Washing- Her research focuses on canonicity, authenticity, and poaching in mod- and contemporary texts. She is currently teaching at Arizona State Uni- at the West Campus.

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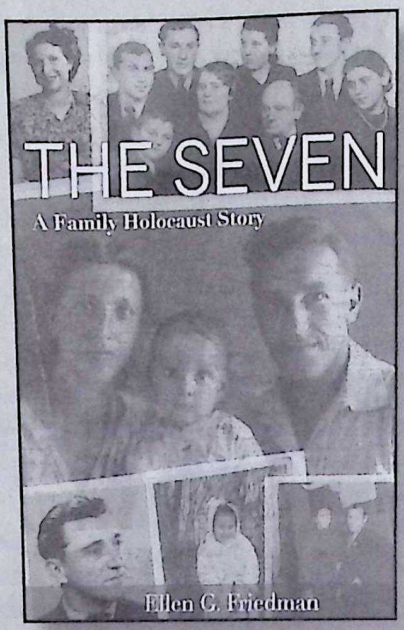

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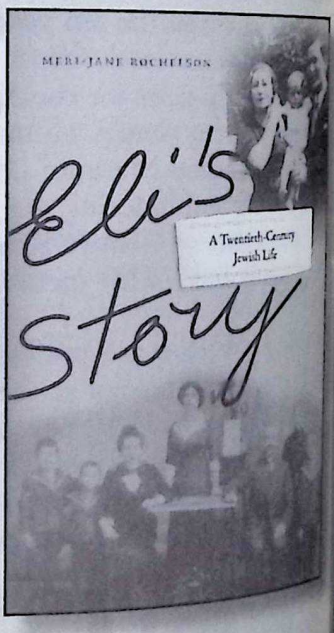

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KELOID GEOGRAPHY
THE YEAR IN AUSTRALIA

GILLIAN WHITLOCK

…t often that the Brisbane Writers' Festival is written up in *The New Yorker* …the *New York Times*, but in September 2016 it was, and the repercussions …cked readings and thoughts about life writing, women's writing, appro…tion, and race throughout this past year.

The event that triggered this provocation was the opening keynote speech …merican novelist Lionel Shriver, a "fly-in, fly-out" writer at the festival …ostensibly spoke on its theme of "Community and Belonging." But from …outset, Shriver set her own course: "I hate to disappoint you folks, but …s we stretch the topic to breaking point, this address will not be about …mmunity and Belonging.' In fact, you have to hand it to the festival's or…ers: expecting a renowned iconoclast to speak about 'community and …nging' is like expecting a great white shark to balance a beach ball on its …" Instead, Shriver spoke about ideologies that, she argues, call into ques…her right to write fiction at all. She begins with a "tempest in a teacup" on …pus at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. As she tells it, two students …a tequila-themed party for a friend and provided miniature sombreros …numerous partygoers wore. The student government at the college called …out as "cultural appropriation," which creates the environment where …nts of color, particularly Latino and Mexican in this case, feel unsafe. …r arrived in Brisbane with a miniature sombrero, ready for the photo …unities that follows her speech.

What is a fiction writer to do? Writing fiction is all about stepping into …people's shoes, trying on their hats: "Those who embrace a vast range …dentities'—ethnicities, nationalities, races, sexual and gender categories, …s of economic under-privilege and disability—are now encouraged to …possessive of their experience and to regard other people's attempts to par…te in their lives and traditions, either actively or imaginatively, as a form

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of theft," Shriver continued in her speech. Shriver went on to list the "masterworks" of literature that would not exist if authors honored these rules, if writers had to seek permission to take intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artifacts from someone else's culture. Are they to seek permission to use a character from another race or culture, or to employ vernacular from a group to which they don't belong? Writers, Shriver argues, *dare* to get into the heads of strangers, project the thoughts and feelings of others, *purloin* whole worlds; fiction is "a disrespectful vocation by nature," it takes "gall," and of course they are exploitative. Are writers to be relegated to the hinterlands of literature, to memoir?

Twenty minutes into this speech the writer Yassmin Abdel-Magied staged a deliberately political exit, one of a number of members of the audience who signaled dissent in this way. In a post the next day, published in *The Guardian* online, Abdel-Magied set out two reasons why she left the room. First, what she heard in Shriver's speech: a celebration of the privilege to appropriate the experiences of others, those who lack the opportunity to speak on their own behalf, and so further entrenching her privilege and their disadvantage. Second, she recoiled from the compliant chuckles as the audience listened to this story of sombreros, "reinforcing and legitimising the words coming from behind the lectern." Abdel-Magied continued, "The stench of privilege hung heavy in the air, and I was reminded of my 'place' in the world. See, here is the thing: if the world were equal, this discussion would be different. But, alas, that utopia is far from realised" (Abdel-Magied, "As Lionel Shriver"). Privilege, not belonging, was now the de facto theme of the festival. By the next day, the festival organizers were in damage-control mode, moving swiftly to organize a "right of reply" session as Shriver did not "speak to her brief" at this festival, whose theme was "Community and Belonging." This was not the conversation the organizers intended to have, though of course literary festivals thrive on controversy and publicity, and the renowned iconoclast Shriver delivered exactly that, as a writer "who desperately wants to be talked about" (Beneba Clarke, "Confronting"). Just as she found an appreciative audience in the event at the festival, so too there was a receptive Australian press, primed by earlier debates and "culture wars," eager to defend the acts of imagination "without which literature is dead" (Bolt). Other fiction writers called for a more measured response, critical of the terms of the binary opposition suggested by Shriver (Van Luyn).

As it happens, Abdel-Magied was also at the festival as a writer, and her memoir *Yassmin's Story: Who Do You Think I Am?* was one of the featured books that season. By the spring of 2016 she had established herself as a powerful, twenty-four-year-old public intellectual who had gained access to

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ces on her own account: the hijabied girl with the power to stage a politi-
ct from Shriver's keynote and post an articulate critique on privilege and
opriation.[1] From the prologue to her memoir we learn more about why
the room that day:

ave been blessed with access to a microphone and as such it is my responsibil-
and my duty to make the most of it—for myself, and for the many others who
't yet have that space. I write this story—my story and the story of the people
ound me who have created what I am—so that I can open a window into another
rld, the world of an Arab-African Muslim migrant woman who calls Australia
me. (xii)

oice of the memoir is youthful, colloquial, and savvy, and what it has to
mains controversial: how a girl born in Sudan in 1991 and raised in the
bs of Brisbane can locate the space to voice that Arab/African/Muslim
ity and still call Australia home. Abdel-Magied writes as a daughter, sis-
cousin, and granddaughter in an extended Sudanese family network; as a
ified engineer who begins the memoir with a prologue drafted on the heli-
f an oil rig, where she is a drilling engineer; as a social activist and pub-
peaker who has engaged in the social justice world since high school; as a
ated public face of youth activism with prestigious awards. The mem-
a manifesto of intersectional activism: working from *within* the system,
ards, committees, and institutional networks where she asks questions,
sts views, and changes values from the inside, using legitimate pathways.
is a faith-based memoir that trusts in sharia law, the will of Allah, and
ustenance of the Ummah with conviction, though not without question.
This memoir authorizes the young woman who will walk out on Shriver,
ing to face the audience, feeling their eyes on her back, "questioning,
ging, judging" (Abdel-Magied, "As Lionel Shriver"). It is hard not to read
n's Story now as a precursor to that moment when she challenges Shriv-
d interrupts this performance of privilege, a topic she returns to con-
ly in the memoir. My aim, she tells us in the memoir, is "to use the plat-
s I am given to ask some unsettling questions, create just enough unease
people slowly shift their perspective to become more inclusive" (108).
er's talk becomes Abdel-Magied's platform for intersectional activism
gency: her account of the keynote now coexists with and travels along-
Shriver's speech online. The extended commentaries on white Anglo-
alian privilege, and on identity and belonging as a Muslim woman in
memoir, give voice to histories and embodied experience that understand
lege as systemic and oppressive, and appropriation as a license to take
out acknowledgment, to profit from underprivileged others time and

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I read *Yassmin's Story* now with a shiver for fear of hubris. "These days," the narrating I of the memoir tells us, "I've learnt that being effective means being discerning about where you choose to lend your voice, and that my credibility, which is what allows me to influence change, is something I must guard in every way possible" (155). On Anzac Day 2017, Abdel-Magied made a fatal error in guarding this credibility when she posted an unguarded Facebook post: "LEST. WE. FORGET. (Manus, Nauru, Syria, Palestine)" (Fyfe).

As an engineer, Abdel-Magied must have known what would happen when she crossed those wires. Connecting the national day of remembrance for the war dead to those who are detained indefinitely in asylum-seeker camps in the Pacific, and to the conflicts in Syria and Palestine, challenges a sacred site of Australian identity and belonging.[2] Her apology, which followed swiftly, made no difference. Sparks fly, and damage is done. She becomes (in her words) "Australia's most publicly hated Muslim." She is vilified and trolled, book tours promoting *Yassmin's Story* are the focus of right-wing critique, repeated calls for her to be removed from the boards and committees where she played a prominent role fuel the controversy, speaking engagements are canceled, and the national broadcaster curtails her appearances. Within a year since the Shriver incident, Abdul-Magied has been excluded from the networks where she was an eloquent activist, and she has questioned the manifesto on community and belonging that inspired her memoir: "I feel like I've been duped, like I've been sold this false sense of belonging" (Fyfe).

Two new books of criticism of life narratives this year establish critical settings to read *Yassim's Story* in the wake of these events. Leigh Gilmore's *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives* is all about that "questioning, querying, judging" that follows women like Yassmin Abdel-Magied, the vilification that lies in wait to ambush women who speak out. The incidents that lead to "the hijabied girl" becoming "Australia's most publicly hated Muslim" dovetail with these case studies of "tainted witness," where articulate women become targets of doubt and censure. In *Life Narratives and Youth Culture*, the first book to bring life writing and youth and childhood studies together, Kate Douglas and Anna Poletti remind me to introduce "youth" into my thinking on *Yassmin's Story* and this controversy, and recognize the textual history and archives of youth life writing.[3] Life writing is a powerful way for young people to respond to the discourses that construct them, and an important strategy for cultural participation, agency, and citizenship. However, Douglas and Poletti insist, they are also at risk: young people who seek to have their stories heard through professional publishing and online environments must adhere to generic expectations that make their identities and experiences intelligible to the chosen audience, and life

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ive is a mode of cultural production that can be heavily policed—by au-
s, journalists, publishers, and critics (8). The "hijabied girl" is a contro-
l figure. As Abdel-Magied reminds us, she chooses to *wear* her identity
visible affirmation of her faith, and this is an Australian story. *Yassmin's*
is an affirmation of citizenship and belonging understood in multicul-
terms, an example of intersectional activism that works from *within* to
social change and reconciliation. But the voice and credibility the high
er creates is precarious, particularly when she challenges rituals of grief
ourning that are emblematic of national identity and citizenship.

Memoirs are sociable things—they congregate and confer. So it is here.
e Beneba Clarke's *The Hate Race: A Memoir* is not exactly a youth mem-
the terms defined by Douglas and Poletti, but it is an African story, and
moir of girlhood and migration that engages with race and gender in the
alian suburbs by an emerging and prolific writer of creative nonfiction,
and children's literature. Beneba Clarke was born in Sydney in 1979,
ild of Black British migrants whose parents migrated to Britain from
West Indies as part of the post-war Windrush generation of the 1950s.
e recalls her parents, Bordy and Cleo, knew that Australia was a nation
ed on the dispossession of Aboriginal inhabitants, knew that for many
es the White Australia policy had privileged white migration and ex-
d migrants of color, but in the 1970s there was the promise of change
the election of a new government that advocated multiculturalism and
ights. Bordy Clarke was one of the first Caribbean graduates with a doc-
e in mathematics and an academic career in Britain, and as Enoch Pow-
ate speech found a receptive audience in the 1970s there, an academic
ion in a new Australian university in western Sydney was appealing.

The Hate Race and *Yassmin's Story* converse, and though their voices are
different, they need to be heard in this debate about ethics, fiction and
moir, and purloined histories. The prologues of each draw out critical dif-
ces between them on the issue of race and belonging. *Yassmin's Story* in-
ces her narrating I as the high achiever, the graduate engineer on a he-
. In *The Hate Race* we first encounter Beneba Clarke as a young mother,
ing her son to school with her baby daughter in a pram in the suburbs
dney. A car pulls over; she hears racist invective: "he's talking to me. . . .
een about ten months since I was openly abused on the street by a total
ger. . . . That heart-in-my-throat, pulse-in-my-temples fear. . . . The na-
s. The remembering how it can happen anywhere, at any time. That
think freeze. I am four years old, on my first day of preschool. . . . I am
ched down on the high school bus, head bowed, pretending not to notice
spit-ball barrage" (vi–vii).

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"Keloid geography" is the key coordinate in the cartography of Beneba Clarke's memoir: "The watery tracks of my family's unbelonging scar this great green globe like keloid geography" (55). Keloids are growths produced by an excess of scar tissue, signs of injury that remain, accentuating scars on the skin. This is an embodied geography, "a testimonial record" that exists within the body, as "stereotypes about race stick to black bodies via repetition over time" (Gilmore 6). Keloid geography maps the enduring history of slavery and the forced migrations that begin in the Atlantic slave trade yet persist across the generations, "though my Africa is four continents, four hundred years of slavery, one forced migration, two voluntary migrations and many lifetimes ago" (Beneba Clarke, *The Hate Race* x). Keloid geography folds time and space together to speak of an enduring testimony incarnate that recalls the "awful and undead" history of slavery. Ta-Nehisi Coates writes of this as an American biography; however, the phenomenon travels across life narrative as an embodied legacy that migrates with the African diaspora far beyond the Americas and the Black Atlantic. Beneba Clarke's memoir engages with the enduring and dark emotions of fear, disgust, and anger that surface in the suburbs of Sydney, where suppressed histories of colonialism and slavery haunt her childhood memories. In the epilogue to *The Hate Race*, Beneba Clarke tells us she wrote this memoir about interactions and misunderstandings around race and ethnicity "because I believe stories like these need to be written into Australian letters. . . . I wanted to show the extreme toll that casual, overt and institutionalised racism can take: the way it erodes us all" (257). As it happens, Beneba Clarke was also at the Brisbane Writers Festival in 2016, promoting *The Hate Race*. She was not in the room for Shriver's keynote, but she was virtually linked in, via tweets and postings on Facebook as the event unfolded live to cyberspace. "I can feel the uneasy anticipation," she recalled, "even through the laptop screen, from my hotel room a kilometre down the street" ("Confronting Lionel Shriver").

It is tempting to think of Shriver's sombrero keynote as an exotic import, a "tempest in a teacup" generated by heated debates about race and migration elsewhere. Ostensibly, what is now known colloquially as "the Shriver debate" is about fiction, the right to write fiction, and to imaginatively enter other worlds. Is fiction itself at risk? Are writers to be confined to less imaginative and creative literary genres where they can only write about their own experience, in memoir? In the past year, debates about cultural appropriation broke out at a number of different locations, and criticism had powerful things to say about life narrative, social justice, and systemic prejudice. Introducing memoir into the Shriver debate and using the coordinates of keloid geography is a reminder of the powerful presence of life stories in contemporary

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As new critical work by Leigh Gilmore and by Kate Douglas and Poletti insists, women and girls who speak of their experience in the person are at risk of judgment and censure. This is an inheritance, borne generations: "My children's early ancestors were part of the Atlantic trade," they "are the descendants of those unbroken," Beneba Clarke (*The Hate Race* 256).

We now have an epilogue of sorts to this story. The 2017 season of the Brisbane Writers Festival has just finished. New organizers have resisted the temptations of having a "renowned iconoclast" as guest writer. This year's fly-out writers kept to script. Yassmin Abdel-Magied, the hijabied girl who called Brisbane home, is gone, now an expatriate public intellectual in London, the city her parents left in search of a new life decades ago. Another Australian rite of passage, she suggests, scripting her life even now in terms of citizenship and belonging.

NOTES

Abdel-Magied is featured in a popular TED Talk, "What Does My Headscarf Mean to You?" during which she ironically underscores the importance of the hat as a prop in Shriver's performance, while she presents herself as a woman who wears many hats, one of them a hijab. Her essay in the *Griffith Review* that was the genesis of her memoir, "On the Rigs," featured in a special issue on women and power.

See my essay in the International Year in Review from last year, titled "Pictures at an Exhibition" for a larger discussion of these themes.

Douglas and Poletti define "youth" in terms of a shifting paradigm, generally associated with the period between leaving school and becoming an adult, so the period between ages fifteen and thirty.

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THE SECOND GENERATION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES OF DICTATORSHIP
THE YEAR IN BRAZIL

SERGIO DA SILVA BARCELLOS

The fifteenth year of military dictatorship in Brazil, in 1979, the creation of amnesty law allowed for the return of political exiles. With them came stories of conflict, torture, and displacement. In the first half of the s, autobiographical accounts about the repressive regime began flooding shelves with titles written by journalists, intellectuals, and artists who ered at the hands of the repression. However, much had yet to be dis- ed and exposed. In Brazil, there was not an effort toward justice through atives such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It not until 2012, with the establishment of the Comissão Nacional da Verdade the second generation of autobiographical narratives of the period sur- d. Stories and memories of children whose parents were subjugated by ary repression contributed a new facet of this dark chapter of national ory.

Until 1978 real information about the repressive regime was scarce and with the Abertura, which means "opening" or "distension," that result- om the revoking of the AI-5 (Institutional Act number 5, of December 1968) did Brazilians start reading and learning about stories of former ical prisoners and exiles. Several autobiographical narratives of journal- writers, sociologists, and left-wing politicians, among others, represented first contact with recent national history for an entire generation. It was n as the boom of memoirs and testimonies of the military dictatorship The first book of the trilogy written by Fernando Gabeira, a former guer- member, *O Que É Isso, Companheiro?*,[1] published in 1979, figured in bestseller lists for three years. Alfredo Sirkis's *Os Carbonários* received the wide acceptance. Other titles are worth mentioning, such as *Memórias:*

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Parte I by Gregório Bezerra, *Querida família* by Flávia Schilling, and *Batismo de sangue: Os dominicanos e a morte de Carlos Marighella* by Frei Beto. Some of these narratives became mandatory reading for those who wanted to learn about the failed revolution and unfortunate backlashes, such as torture and exile. Most of these authors attempted to offer a passionate autobiographical account while presenting a critical retrospective view on their experiences. Their projects, however, lacked a more dialectic approach. In spite of the many graphic descriptions of the physical and psychological torture inflicted on political prisoners, a cross-checking of their versions of these accounts did not happen then, nor has one happened today. When the amnesty law for political prisoners passed, it pardoned both guerrilla members and military torturers. The archives of the dictatorship were sealed and kept under confidentiality until recently when two important steps were taken toward revisiting the recent past. The first one was the law number 12,527 of 2011, known as Lei de Acesso à Informação, granting relatively unrestricted access to all public information under government care (*Presidência da República*). Next, May 16, 2011, saw the establishment of the Comissão Nacional da Verdade, whose goals were to investigate and clarify all human rights violations that occurred between 1964 and 1988.

The access to documents pertaining to this period revealed a chasm between the different ways lives had been compromised by political and ideological conflicts. On one side, young men and women offered their lives to rebel against dictatorship by either verbalizing their opinion or by bearing arms and confronting the regime. On the other were the memories of innocent children dragged involuntarily into a conflict they did not understand and whose effects drastically marked their lives.

A CAUSE GREATER THAN ONE'S OWN LIFE

In the documentary *No Es Hora de Llorar*, Roque Aparecido da Silva, a metal worker and college student, narrates how, during the sessions of torture, he thought about defying the torturers to incite them to beat him to death. Death meant not only the end of pain but also a way to avoid disclosure of the whereabouts of his fellow guerillas. However, after a while, he explains that:

> Eu não posso dispor da vida como eu bem entendo. Então, eu percebi que eu não podia provocar para morrer logo, que eu tinha que procurar resistir e ter um comportamento que possibilitasse eu manter a vida, entende? Eu continuar vivo porque, independente do tempo que eu ficasse preso, eu sabia que de uma forma ou de outra eu recuperaria a liberdade e me integraria novamente à luta para continuar, junto com a minha classe, até a morte ou a vitória final. (27:04–28:32)

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cannot dispose of my life as I please. So I realized that I could not bring myself to
soon, that I had to try to resist and behave in ways that would allow me to stay
you know? And stay alive because no matter how long I was detained, I knew
one way or another I would regain my freedom and join again the struggle to
continue, along with my class, toward death or the final victory.]

surrender of one's life to the cause, apart from revealing the romantic
cy of some elements engaged in the revolutionary front, also revealed
lematic and serious development, as in the case of the consequences suf-
by the children of militants, who were imprisoned, exiled, and consid-
dangerous elements of society.

LIVES INTERRUPTED

first memoirs and autobiographies about the Brazilian dictatorship were
en during the last breaths of the repressive regime and now can be con-
ed an achievement and a failure simultaneously. These narratives, built
individuals' memories and specific points of view, were offered mostly
audience deprived of further knowledge or access to a comprehensive
ination of that particular political context. The first accounts failed to
impartially with crucial topics related to the goals and the methods for
ving a political turn in Brazil during the dictatorial period. In a sense,
critics saw in these narratives an excess of trivialization of the torture
the experience of exile, as well as negligence in genuinely representing
desires or thoughts of Brazilian people. The majority of the members of
ical organizations fighting the military dictatorship believed in their fun-
ental role as beacons and leaders of the people in building a new political
m. The only missing part was, in most cases, a massive participation of
people itself.

In the aftermath of the most violent acts of oppression, the emergence of
atives of exile and imprisonment seemed natural and even necessary. In
of what Maurice Blanchot called "the writing of disaster," the first gen-
on of dictatorship memoirs and autobiographies assumed a less personal
e in order to achieve the goal of telling the history of the recent politi-
past. The urgency to expose the backlash after the attempted revolution,
well as the motivations for it, in an objective yet partial way, was deemed
e important than dealing with personal traumas. Somehow, the omitted
was being revealed but not scrutinized. The individual suffering was be-
neglected to allow history to be told.

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However, as Blanchot suggests, the disaster should speak for itself through silence or forgetfulness:

> To read, to write, the way one leaves under the surveillance of the disaster: exposed to the passivity of that is outside passion. The heightening of forgetfulness.
>
> It is not you who will speak; let the disaster speak in you, even if it be by your forgetfulness or silence. (Blanchot 4)

This perspective contrasts with the trivialization that took place during the boom of dictatorship memoirs of the 1980s. Moreover, any utterance or attempt to articulate disaster in writing would necessarily entail both the impossibility of the manifestation of disaster, from the personal point of view, and its precipitation as a potential and lingering life event.

In 2014, the Comissão Nacional da Verdade do Estado de São Paulo published the results of a two-year investigation in public archives and interviews with witnesses and individuals who suffered torture or human rights violations, as well as military personnel involved in such acts. A significant contribution of this committee's work is the publication of the book *Infância Perdida: Crianças Atingidas pela Ditatura Militar no Brasil*. The book comprises the testimonies of forty-four individuals who were children during the most repressive years of the military dictatorship. Some of them were captured and taken to juvenile-court facilities. Others were kept for days inside clandestine torture centers, where they witnessed the torture of their parents. Some of these individuals were born in prison. Almost all of them were forced to leave the country, with or without their parents. They all had to change their names. In most cases, they were too young even to know their real names. Only upon their return to Brazil, after 1979, were they allowed to obtain their official documents with their real names. At a very young age, from five to ten years old, they were charged in their police records as being "perigosas à segurança nacional" [dangerous elements to national security] (Comissão da Verdade 14). These children shared the fact that they had no participation in or knowledge of the crimes their parents had supposedly committed. After living in silence for three decades, the testimonies given by these individuals during the hearings of the Comissão exposed the magnitude of the violent and inhumane practices of the period.

The testimony of Rita de Cássia Resende illustrates well how the lives of these children were subtracted from them and how, as young adults, they refused to have a political opinion that might ultimately have allowed them to understand their parents' actions. Resende describes the night when, at six years of age, the repressive regime stormed into her house:

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[Foi uma noite de pesadelo. Acordei com batidas fortes na porta, gritos, depois porta caindo, a casa sendo invadida por soldados fortemente armados. Hoje eu diria que foi um filme de terror. Depois, a prisão. . . . Mães e crianças ficamos mais de cinco meses presas. . . . Durante anos me fechei e não suportava política e polícia. Depois, entendi que a causa de meus pais era nobre. Lutaram por um ideal de justiça e igualdade social. (Comissão da Verdade 37)

[It was a nightmarish night. I woke up with someone pounding on the door, yelling, and then the door collapsing on the floor and the house being invaded by heavily armed soldiers. After that, the prison. . . . Mothers and children were kept in jail for more than five months. . . . For many years I retreated into myself and hated politics and police. I finally understood that my parents' cause was a noble one. They fought for an ideal of justice and social equality.]

ON BEHALF OF PARENTS: FREE OF IDEOLOGIES OR MORAL CERTAINTIES

The journalist Matheus Leitão was born when the military regime entered its seventh year. In 1978, his parents worked as journalists and lived in the capital, Brasília. When Leitão turned twelve, his father told him the story of his engagement with the political activism of the banned Partido Comunista Brasil against the military regime. During this conversation, three words reverberated in his ears: *perseguição* (persecution), *prisão* (imprisonment), *porão* (basement). He writes, "A palavra 'tortura,' para mim o pior de todos os substantivos, não foi mencionada naquele dia" [The word "torture," to me the worst of all nouns, was not mentioned that day] (Leitão). In the course of his career, Leitão wrote newspaper articles about the dictatorship in Brazil, as well as interviews with tortured individuals and, occasionally, their torturers. His most challenging story was being surreptitiously written, and that was the story of his parents' involvement with the Communist guerrillas.

Em Nome dos Pais was published early in 2017, and this text is an exercise of *autojornalismo* (self-journalism), as defined by the author. During his time as a visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, under the supervision of Lowell Bergman, Leitão learned about the concept that would structure his auto/biographical narrative:

> O fio condutor compreendeu o meu entendimento da prisão e da tortura sofridas por meus pais, a angústia que isso me provocou, a procura por documentos oficiais e a investigação, até encontrar aquele que os delatou aos militares. Narro também a visita que fiz a um dos locais em que meu pai esteve preso, na mesma época que minha mãe, e a árdua peregrinação atrás dos torturadores, a mais sofrida e fatigante. Por isso este livro está em primeira pessoa. É o relato de minha procura. (Leitão)

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> [The guiding thread comprised my understanding of the arrest and torture that my parents suffered, the anguish they felt, my search for official documents, and my investigation until I discovered who betrayed them to the military. I also describe the visit I made to one of the places where both my parents were imprisoned at the same time. The most agonizing and tiring task was the search for the torturers. Thus this book is in the first person. It is the account of my search.]

In spite of being a story of his parents' past, the author believes that his story is one way of speaking about many others, a national dialogue between present and past generations, between the two sides of a historical conflict. Hence the author defines the book as free of ideologies or moral certainties. The author's goal was to be impartial, to be willing to listen to both sides. And this quest led to the interviews, or the attempts to talk, of three key figures: the guerrilla member who betrayed the comrades, among them Leitão's father; the captain appointed to oversee the torture sessions; and the torturer of his parents. The author learned their names when he obtained access to the transcripts of the military police investigations of his parents. Leitão found and interviewed the traitor, a former leader of the regional section of the Partido Comunista do Brasil, who after hours regretted his actions and apologized to Leitão's parents and other militants. Many other interviews for the book reveal the convenient amnesia of the members of the military who engaged in human-rights violations. In another interview, a former military member who practiced torture denies all accusations and even doubts the testimony of a guerrilla militant whom he tortured and raped in prison.

Perhaps the ultimate value of Leitão's narrative is his attempt to initiate a dialogue by gathering perspectives from both sides. If throughout the book the author does not deny his personal involvement, although collateral, to the subject, he also expects to create an arena where unique positions could be afforded equal rights. For instance, Leitão poignantly narrates how his mother, pregnant with his older brother, was taken naked to a dark room and left alone with a snake for an undetermined time. He describes how this scene would haunt his sleep for many years. He also tries to interview the siblings of the captain who was responsible for the torture center. After several phone calls, one of the sons agrees to meet with him. In the place and time of the meeting, Leitão waits for two hours, closes his eyes, and in his imagination he sees someone approaching. But it is only in his imagination. He then realizes, "não há milagre nesse dia. Falhei, Marcelo e Míriam. Penso em pedir desculpas a eles e a seus companheiros. A toda uma geração. Não tenho as respostas que buscava em nome dos pais" [there is no miracle today. I failed, Marcelo and Míriam. I think of apologizing to them and their comrades. To an entire generation. I do not have the answers I looked for on behalf of the parents] (Leitão).[2]

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The testimonies of the Comissão Nacional da Verdade and the narrative Matheus Leitão differ from the first generation of stories of the dictator- in at least two ways. The most explicit ones are the chosen genre—tes- ies and what Leitão calls "self-journalism"—and the temporal detach- of these voices and the possibility of their dealing with the past from a informed vantage point. The stories of the parents who fought against ession are an element of their identities that cannot be ignored. However, lives and their relationship with the current history of their country is or ld be a result of a long process of reparation. Leitão explains that in his ay, he proposes an inquiry to the country: "podemos reconciliar a na- iciando o debate por pessoas que não estiveram, de fato, nos dois lados le tempo tão radical?" [can we reconcile a nation by starting a discussion those who were not in fact on either side of those extreme times?]. The r, on the positive side, seems to be the resurgence of the past through ives such as *Em Nome dos Pais* and testimonies such as those in *Infân- ubada*. On the more perplexing side, even after access to classified files torture, assassination, and illegal imprisonment of political activists, an sing number of Brazilians are calling for intervention and the return of ictatorial military regime. More than ever, revisiting and reexamining cent past is an unavoidable and necessary task.

NOTES

The movie *Four Days in September* (1997), based on Fernando Gabeira's book and di- ted by Bruno Barreto, was nominated for the Oscar for best foreign film.

Miriam Leitão and Marcelo Amorim Neto are journalists and parents of the author.

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HYBRID AND PRACTICAL LIFE NARRATIVES
THE YEAR IN BURKINA FASO

EDGARD SANKARA

The former French colony of La Haute-Volta was renamed Burkina Faso, which means "land of upright men," by the progressivist leader Thomas Sankara in 1984, twenty-four years after independence. Because before, during, and after the colonial era, specialists were devoted to telling the life stories of aristocratic members of many traditional ethnic groups, oral life narratives have been an integral part of Burkinabè culture. These "griots," or bards, were generally attached to one noble family. The oral stories they told preserved the genealogy of noblemen and also entertained a popular audience. With the advent of colonialism, very few written traces of life narratives of people from Burkina Faso were reported. It was not until 1955 that a life writing text appeared: *Le Sacrifice d'Aloys Lankoandé*, a biography of a Burkinabè boy scout who was devoted to Christianity and drowned in the Niger River when he attempted to save another man. Because griots have traditionally filled the role of documenting lives in traditional culture, Burkinabè people have shied away from writing about their lives. It is therefore unsurprising that the biography of Lankoandé was written by an outsider to Burkina Faso, the French missionary Alphonse Chantoux.

The high illiteracy rate that has persisted since colonial times is an important factor in the scarcity of written life narratives in Burkina Faso before 1991. From its independence in 1960 to 1987, Burkina Faso experienced at least five coups d'état. The authoritarian nature of the military regimes and the censorship they exerted rendered difficult the writing of life narratives by Burkinabè citizens. In 1992, with France's call to end military regimes and the promotion of democratic rule in Africa, a new era of freedom of expression followed as many private and independent newspapers were created. Subsequently, after 1992, there has been a blossoming of life stories in Burkina Faso and by its citizens (see Sankara).

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the past year, four life narratives have emerged in Burkina Faso. In
award-winning journalist Alexandre Lebel Ilboudo published *Sa Majesté*
Baoogo II: Un médiateur naturel.[1] In just fifty-five pages, Ilboudo's short
graphy of the Emperor of the Mossi appears to be self-published because
ublishing house's name matches the author's: Lebel.[2] The preface was
en by Chief Jean Gervais Tchiffi Zié, who is from Ivory Coast and is also
hief of all Krou chiefs and the permanent general-secretary of the Coun-
the Forum of Kings, Sultans, Princes, Sheiks, and Traditional Chiefs in
. Dubbed with this title by Muhammad Gadhafi in 2008, Chief Tchiffi
rites in the preface that if countries like Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Sierra
e had someone with the stature of Burkina Faso's Moogho Naaba Baoo-
, they would have been spared the devastating wars they experienced.
s a Burkinabè journalist and writer who was born and based in neigh-
e Ivory Coast, Ilboudo may have a skewed perspective on the subject
is biography. Ilboudo did not witness the October 2014 popular upris-
hat ousted President Blaise Compaoré, who had ruled for twenty-seven
. Emperor Naaba Baoogo II has ruled for thirty years as the traditional
reign of the Mossé. Ilboudo declares that the idea of writing this biogra-
ecmmed from a delegation he led to Moogho Naaba's court in the after-
of the 2014 uprising and the subsequent change of state power. Dur-
his visit, Ilboudo said he was impressed by the unequivocal support the
eror showed him and the various Burkinabè organizations in Ivory Coast
do was leading during his visit to the emperor.

Iboudo presents the book as an homage to Moogho Naaba: "En fait,
is son intronisation le 21 décembre 1982 en tant que 32e souverain
aga de l'histoire, Naaba Baoogo II rallie tous les suffrages et apparaît
me une référence, un repère pour le peuple Burkinabè" (17) [Since his
ning on December 21, 1982, as the thirty-second sovereign of the Mossi,
a Baoogo II gathers unanimous acclaim and appears as a guide, a ref-
ce for the Burkinabè people]. This is a questionable assertion because
Mossi ethnic groups are sometimes irritated by the prominent attention
emperor receives to their detriment. Ilboudo writes that, when the Con-
pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (CDP), the main political party under
dent Compaoré, sought his advice in 2014, the emperor had advised
party not to change the constitution to allow another term for the then-
dent beyond the two-term limit. Unfortunately, the CDP did not follow
emperor's advice, and the October 2014 uprising ousted the president
weakened the CDP.

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Ilboudo points out the key role Moogho Naaba Baoogo played in crucial moments of the country's history: after the uprising in November 2014, after unsuccessfully trying to proclaim himself President of Burkina Faso, General Kouamé Lougué fled and took refuge in the palace of Moogho Naaba Baoogo (19). In February 2015, the Prime Minister, Lieutenant-Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida, was informed that the infamous and recalcitrant Presidential Guard (Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle, or RSP) planned to ambush him at the Presidential palace and also took refuge in the palace of the Moogho Naaba (19). In September 2015, the Presidential Guard finally detained Prime Minister Zida and the President of Burkina Faso, Hyacinthe Kafando, along with a few ministers, and started a coup d'état endorsed and led by the former commander of the RSP, General Gilbert Diendéré. A popular uprising and resistance unfolded, and the rest of the army, opposed to the coup, marched toward the capital. Given the imminent combat between the two armed parties, Moogho Naaba served as the mediator and a truce was signed on September 23 (17–18). Ilboudo stresses the importance of Moogho Naaba as a stabilizing force in politics in Burkina Faso, and he concludes that Moogho Naaba should play a role as a mediator in conflicts on the international stage as well.

Similar to how Ilboudo's text is the biography of a famous man whose story is inflected by the position of the author, Adama Amadé Siguiri's 2016 text, *Blaise Compaoré, Le règne d'un ange?!: Paroles d'un insurgé* resists classification because of how it mixes a critical biography of the former president Compaoré with the testimony of the author as a citizen who was opposed to the president and who contributed to the overthrow of his regime. The book is also labeled "Essai politique," which adds to its complexity. Nevertheless, Siguiri's life story appears to add credibility to his essay. Siguiri, a University of Ouagadougou graduate, took a national test and became a primary school teacher in the northern region of Burkina Faso. He recounts that, in spite of his successes as a teacher (the sixth grade students he taught were all successful at a national exam and received their primary school certificate), he had some clashes with his superiors, which led him to quit teaching and embrace the difficult and uncertain profession of being a writer. Through the turmoil of his new profession, Siguiri denounces the system of President Compaoré, which he labels "Compaorose" [Comparorosis] to portray it as a disease, by pointing to suspicions that Compaoré's election was likely rigged and to accusations of the president's alleged hypocrisy and embezzlement:

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Le jour des élections présidentielles, je me rappelle encore, ce fait flagrant de fraude. Le responsable C.D.P. du village dans lequel j'étais membre de bureau de vote avait reçu à faire voter les électeurs présents à la place de tous les électeurs absents. Les gens, surtout de jeunes femmes, défilaient devant les membres du bureau de vote avec des cartes électorales qui ne portaient ni leurs noms, ni leurs prénoms. Ils venaient souvent en groupe comme pour tenir le pari de frauder. J'étais dans un milieu où l'on parlait le mooré. Et étant Mossi moi-même, rien ne m'échappait de la conversation des jeunes femmes. En fait, les responsables C. D. P. leur remettaient les cartes électorales dans les quartiers avec des conseils et des consignes stricts. (52–53)

[On Election Day, I still remember this flagrant electoral fraud. The representative of the CDP (in the village where I was a member of the electoral commission) managed to have some villagers vote for the absentee voters. People, mostly young women, lined up in front of the electoral commission with voter registration cards that did not match their first or last names. They often came in groups as if to embolden themselves to commit fraudulent voting. I was around people who spoke Mooré. Being a Mossi myself, I could clearly hear and understand the conversation of those young women. In fact, the CDP representatives had simply given them fraudulent voter registration cards in their districts with strict instructions on how to vote.]

As we can see from the above passage, Siguiri casts himself as both an observer and an actor of the sociopolitical events that brought the demise of President Compaoré and his regime; he touches on the transition government from November 2014 to December 2015 and concludes the book with his vision of future leaders of Burkina Faso.

Whereas Ilboudo's and Siguiri's texts are hybrid biographical and autobiographical works, Ibrahima Korbéogo, under the pen name of Abou Zeyd, published in 2017 an autobiographical text that is also a self-help book titled *Rouqya: Combats contre les démons et les sorciers*. Zeyd's text is a spiritual life story and a theoretical and practical book on his experience of learning exorcism, applying it to heal himself, and the various exorcism sessions he led to liberate others of demons. The author describes his personal investment in learning about exorcism:

Aussi je tombais régulièrement malade. C'est dans ce contexte qu'un spécialiste de la rouqya (l'exorcisme) est venu en 2008 pour organiser des séances de traitement et de stage à l'endroit de ceux qui voulaient devenir des Raqy (ceux qui pratiquent la rouqya). Je saisis l'occasion pour apprendre la rouqya. (8)

[I also often fell sick. It is in this context that a specialist of the *rouqya* (exorcism) came in 2008 to organize healing and training sessions for those who wanted to become Raqy (the practitioners of *rouqya*). I seized the opportunity to learn the

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The book is divided into two parts. In the first, the author describes how he learned to be an exorcist and how he applied the method to cure himself and others. This part includes numerous exorcism sessions on his sister and other people. A total of thirty sessions are described in full detail, including conversations he had with various demons during the sessions. The second part of the book is more theoretical, as the author endeavors to teach about "genies" (djinns), who are evil spirits or demons, about witchcraft, and about how to recognize signs of sorcery and the presence of demons. He also talks about how to practice exorcism by using the Koran, the recitation of incantations, and how to exorcise a child who is less than four years old. He also tells about how to use infusions, incense, and powders to conduct exorcisms.

While the above publications focus on the lives of notable men, Faartio Flore Hien's 2016 publication, *Oh My God!!!: Chronique de souvenirs américains*, is the only publication by a Burkinabè woman in recent years. The book appears to be an autobiographical novel because, like the protagonist Métouèlè Yikil, the author herself was a Fulbright recipient in 2011, which allowed her to earn an MA at Auburn University in Alabama. Yikil stays in the US for two and a half years and, despite her parents' and friends' advice, she decides to return to her native Burkina Faso at the end of her Fulbright program. Yet she remains anxious about her return and reintegration into the society and the professional world of her country. Yikil's journey parallels the life and experience of the author. The book is divided into seventeen chapters that begin with the return to Burkina Faso and then look back to her preparations for her trip to the US, her departure, the trip itself, her stay in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and her move to Auburn, Alabama, and her experiences of the American education system. The sequencing of the chapters resembles the typical steps an international student follows while studying in the US. Yikil's life experience is therefore an example that the author wants to set for potential young Burkinabè students who would like to pursue graduate studies in the US. This rhetoric of example casts the book as a survival guide. The text dwells on details about intercultural communication, culture shock, and the comparison of two education systems. She expresses a preference for the US, although at times she is amused by the differences between the two countries, as when she learns about American regulations concerning pets: "Cette information lui avait arraché un fou rire, ce qui avait créé de l'étonnement chez les autres. Et comment! Il fallait donc une autorisation pour posséder ou pas un chien ou un chat! 'Bienvenue aux Etats-Unis, ma très chère Yikil!' s'était-elle répété intérieurement" (79) [This information made her burst into a crazy laughter to the astonishment of others. Unbelievable! So, one had to first secure an authorization in order to possess a dog or a cat! "Welcome to the United States, my beloved Yikil!" she mumbled to herself].

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CONCLUSION

The four life writing texts described above illustrate, Burkinabè life writers extend traditional forms of biography and autobiography. These contributions to life narratives in Burkina Faso, although small in number, show a growing interest in the writing practice of this nation to address practical and sociopolitical matters. This trend will certainly continue because the long reign of President Compaoré and the violent political events of 2014–2015 have left profound scars. These events may inspire numerous life narratives in the future, both from the older generation and the younger generation who played an important part in the political events and who may have their say in how they interpret through these events. To encourage youth's testimony, the new government of Burkina Faso may encourage testimonial writing and facilitate the publications of these texts through subsidies. This era undoubtedly deserves writing from the new generation to add a new page in Burkina Faso political history. It is no surprise that French President Emmanuel Macron, in his recent historical visit to Burkina Faso from November 27–29, 2017, chose youth as his main audience in the declaration of his new vision of French politics for Africa. It can be hoped that women, who continue to experience marginalization in publications and in politics, will write more and take advantage of the government's *Loi sur le quota genre* (gender quota), which was published in 2009 and allocates thirty percent of spots for women in elections, to secure more rights and more representation in literary publications.

NOTES

Ilboudo has won several international prizes, including CNN's 2010 MultiChoice African Journalist award. He is also the vice president of the Organisation Nationale des Journalistes d'Investigation de Côte d'Ivoire (ONJI-CI). He writes for the Ivorian newspaper *Le Patriote*.

Ilboudo's wording of the name and title of the sovereign leader of the Mossi is different from what is currently used in Burkina Faso, where the emperor is referred to as Le Moogho Naaba; Moro Naba or Mogh-Naba; and Baongho, Baongo, or Baõgo. Although Ilboudo uses "Roi des Moosé" (19) to describe him, inside Burkina Faso, Naaba Baoogo II is referred to as the "Emperor of the Mossi," because other kings are under his authority or are related to him.

The Moogho Naaba and his subjects form an ethnic group called the Mossi or Moosé (which is the plural of "Moaga"). I will be referring to them as Mossi. The Mossi speak a language called "Mooré" and are the majority ethnic group in Burkina Faso, comprising nearly half of the country's population.

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LIVES OF THE AGING
THE YEAR IN CANADA

ALANA BELL

of the most significant trends in Canadian life writing this year has been proliferation of stories about aging and dying family members. Canada's recent fixation with aging is understandable. Census data from 2016 ws the number of seniors in Canada's population exceeding the number of ldren for the first time. In fact, the largest growing Canadian demographic 2011 is centenarians, whose numbers have increased by 41.3 percent. baby boomers are aging, our population is living longer, our fertility s have declined, and these trends are creating a shift in our intellectual philosophical landscape (Ciolfe). This year's life writing reflects Canadi- preoccupation with aging, illness, and death by documenting the lives of e who care for older loved ones and mourn them when they are gone. In essay, I focus on four exemplary texts because of the specific voices and rms they add to our national consideration of aging while also stretching mits of auto/biographical form. In narrating the aging, illness, and death mily members, Margaret Christakos's *Her Paraphernalia*, Lynn Crosbie's *Corpses of the Future*, Joy Kogawa's *Gently to Nagasaki*, and James Mas- k's *Life on the Ground Floor* address the silencing of aging voices and the of writing as a coping mechanism for caregivers negotiating the trauma milial loss. These texts raise questions about narrating the lives of vul- ble subjects and inscribe the aging body in language, experimenting with biographical form in the process. As they narrate the lives of elders, these explore institutions crucial to Canadian lives and also grapple with the nal history in which the aging population has been a key player.

In terms of form, the most groundbreaking texts I consider here, are Mar- Christakos's *Her Paraphernalia* and Lynn Crosbie's *The Corpses of the Fu- e*. These texts address the seismic shift that occurs in an autobiographical ker's life when a parent undergoes a sudden illness. In 2012, Christakos

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turned fifty, her daughter turned fifteen, her marriage ended, and her mother suffered "an ischemic stroke that deprived her of the ability to create or receive unjumbled language" (11). Noting that the words her mother "retained, from the difficult garble of paraphasia, are unmistakable expressions of her love for and pleasure at seeing my siblings, my children and me," Christakos explains that this altered relationship with her mother marks a new phase in her own life "as a woman, daughter and girl," a moment that allows her to recognize "a palpable umbilical rope that moves from the middle of my body through the middle of hers and which extends toward the other women of her lineage, from who I am descended, but with whom I have felt little attachment or identity" (11). Highly experimental, Christakos's text exemplifies the formal inventiveness of life writing recently published by Canadian independent presses. Organized into ten *études* and including dated entries, *Her Paraphernalia* logs time over four years in which Christakos explores her identity in connection to her female family members in the face of her mother's decline. The first and least experimental *étude* explains the form, which Christakos refers to as "tumultétudes," in fact "messy portraits, porous forays" into the nature of her identity and selfhood (19). This multigenre text includes diary entries, poetry, prose passages, photos, selfies, and even photo captions leading out of the text to images posted on Facebook as Christakos travels to England and Greece in an attempt to trace the history of her female ancestors. The book is playful and self-conscious, exploring the luxury of "a woman's pleasure in self-recognition," something not afforded Christakos's forebears, because domestic labor often precluded a creative life (61). At the same time, the text is highly meta-autobiographical, most interestingly through Christakos's exploration of the selfie (referred to playfully by Christakos as "cellphie," perhaps to highlight the cellphone's prevalence as a tool for self-narration) as autobiographical form. For Christakos, "the brief moments when one turns the cellphone into a camera to surf only the self . . . are retrievals of a nostalgic individualism in a post-individualist age," and the imperfection of the self-image therein creates "a catalogue of becomingness" (102). Noting that, "When your parent's dying (maybe) it's hard to remember your own identity" (87), Christakos responds to her mother's decline with a "luxurious and radical" textual reinscribing through a multiple and creative representation of her mother, her self, and her relationship with female family members (102). While Christakos's mother may be dying, she has passed her creativity on to her daughter, who uses it to write the communal self of which her mother remains an integral part.

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Lynn Crosbie's beautiful and wrenching *The Corpses of the Future* paints a sombre picture of the aging and their caregiver family members. In November 2013, Crosbie's father fell down the basement stairs of his Montreal-home and was diagnosed with "a bad concussion" (xi). Crosbie's description of his subsequent medical care would make excellent fodder for those to bemoan the inadequacies of Canada's universal healthcare system and to that it is ill-equipped to confront an aging population. Douglas Crosbie was released from the hospital in terrible pain and told he would need to wait five months for an MRI. When he became "so sick he could not get out of bed," Crosbie's mother called an ambulance, and doctors discovered that his brain had been bleeding the whole time. He underwent surgery immediately and during the procedure he "suffered two small strokes in the perior region of his brain" (xi). He came to consciousness "blind, but lucid," was diagnosed with "frontotemporal dementia" shortly thereafter (xi). Like Christakos's mother, Douglas Crosbie is not silenced by his ordeal; rather, his voice and experience have changed, and the double confusion brought on by blindness and dementia "often keeps him away" from his family "in a region [Crosbie] can access only through the parole of dreams and memory and lies" (xii). Crosbie not only writes her father's life before illness into her auto/biographical poetry collection, but also his current voice. Her life-narrative poetry in both English and French—aligns well with her father's new way of experiencing and narrating his world.

Crosbie's father—who is institutionalized, regularly restrained, often sedated, and sometimes unaware of his surroundings—talks of acts of violence, both present and past. Douglas Crosbie's matter-of-fact expressions of the violence he believes inflicted upon him by residents and workers of his institution—"I had better let you go, they have a knife at my throat" (7)—speak to the brutality of both dementia and our systems for addressing it. Taking place over two years, the book marks time obsessively, as Crosbie and her family struggle with her father's condition and circumstances. Seasons pass. Her family members die. Her old dog gets sicker. Crosbie describes her own depression and career spiral, while trying to remain of use to her father. Throughout, Crosbie, her siblings, her mother, and her father "shudder in a failing nest on a skinny branch" (46), but they remain a family "madly in love" (32). And while Crosbie mourns the loss of a strong, nurturing parent, she reincribes him in language both as the man he was and as the man he continues to be, loving and given to moments of stunning clarity and humor despite his illness.

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Her father alive, but not himself, Crosbie addresses directly the issue of representing vulnerable subjects in memoir, confronting the tension between her need to write this experience and the humiliation and confusion inherent in the lives of those with dementia. The man who "carried me on his broad shoulders" (12), who "worked with numbers . . . beautifully, portentously" (21) now feels like (his words) "a flea in a mattress filled with white feathers" (25), wears a "onesie" (46), is denied telephone access, and begs to be taken home (27). Crosbie describes her father's lifelong fear of humiliation and "the inexplicable shame that has chased him ever since his surgery" (28). She addresses him in the afterword, apologizing if anything she has written "troubles or hurts" him and thanking him for "writing this book with me" (141). Her fear of exposing her father ultimately surpassed by the need to remember and celebrate him, Crosbie has written a powerful account of aging, illness, and family relationships with much for life writing scholars to explore.

While Crosbie and Christakos present personal stories of a parent in decline, Joy Kogawa's *Gently to Nagasaki* and James Maskalyk's *Life on the Ground Floor* position the end-of-life experiences of family members against a backdrop of Canadian history and institutions. Kogawa's complex and challenging *Gently to Nagasaki* describes the Canadian literary icon's attempts to come to terms with her Anglican priest father's long history of sexually abusing boys. In 2015, the Anglican Church of Canada apologized for not disclosing Gordon Nakayama's 1995 admission of abusing his young parishioners. At the time, Kogawa, a Member of the Order of Canada and the Order of British Columbia recognized for bringing Japanese internment to Canadians' attention through her award-winning writing, was quoted by the CBC as saying what mattered "is reconciliation, is truth-telling" (Rasmussen). As she describes in her memoir, Kogawa had been aware of her father's behavior since her teens and had struggled to understand how the parent she adored could be capable of such heinous abuse. Through poetry and journal fragments, letters and emails, passages from newspaper articles and historical documents, and chapters that sometimes seem like discrete essays, *Gently to Nagasaki* attempts to negotiate the truth of Kogawa's experience of her father in a way that both acknowledges his crimes and allows for recognition that despite them he was a loving parent and dedicated community leader.

While Christakos and Crosbie use their books to reinscribe a parent who has lost the capacity to represent him- or herself, Kogawa's portrait of her now-deceased father complicates the public record and seeks to explain why, as a public figure herself, she did not denounce him sooner. As Kogawa attempts to reconcile her father's predatory behavior with his kindness and empathy, her dialogic text includes conflicting professional opinions on the harm

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d by childhood sexual abuse that makes for difficult reading. Kogawa
es to admit that the vulnerable subject here is not the elderly, stoic fa-
e nursed through cancer, but the boys he abused in his younger years.
victims serve as a means for Kogawa finally to face her father's guilt, but
es not tell their stories in the text. When she initiates a meeting with
her father's victims, the narrative remains focused on Kogawa's reac-
. We know that the abuse "Carl" describes is terrible, because Kogawa
pse[s]" upon hearing his story (157). Finally forced to confront the radi-
sconnect between her "blithe, light-hearted father" and the man "who
babies" (158), Kogawa "can't bring [her]self to repeat [Carl's] words,"
acterizing her response as denial, but also avoiding sharing more of the
than is hers to tell (155).

Kogawa's exploration of her father's crimes is set against the Canadian
ment's internment of Japanese Canadians, the bombing of Nagasaki,
the Nanking Massacre, and in multiple circumstances, both individuals,
cularly the aging and recently deceased, and nations are shown here to be
le simultaneously of great good and evil. The ability to reconcile the two
o reconcile with one another as victims and perpetrators is at the heart
gawa's text. In the final chapters, as she travels to Nagasaki, she realizes
"However we may seek to suppress it, knowing cannot be suppressed"
). We cannot deny the painful parts of our history. Because, as she has
n, all lives exist at a complex intersection of right and wrong, we all need
dance and mercy, love and truth" (169). Ultimately, Kogawa's text, like
thers discussed here, speaks to the deep connection between children
their elderly parents, but also highlights the fact that aging citizens have
plex personal and national histories. Remembering them is also a way of
iating our relationships with a sometimes difficult past.

While Kogawa's text addresses the role of elders in national history, James
kalyk's memoir considers aging in the context of our medical system,
Canada's defining institutions. An emergency room physician and for-
member of Médecins Sans Frontières, Maskalyk divides his time between
onto's St. Michael's Hospital and Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa,
opia. *Life on the Ground Floor* is a fast-paced yet thoughtful account of
kalyk's professional life punctuated by moments of peace and contempla-
in a third setting: his aging grandfather's rural Alberta cabin. Maskalyk
ions his work in relation to our aging population, noting that "as people
nger on more medicines that make more side effects . . . there are more
e in our ER every day" (47). Encountering patients and their families on
worst day of their life," his job is to "give a stranger's body another min-
another day, another year" (3). The text is often breathless in its portrayal

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of the tension of the ER, emulating in language a workspace with "No here or then, just one stretching moment" (73). More than a narrative conceit offering relief from the excitement of the emergency room, Maskalyk's story of his grandfather shows that emergency medicine, which is often end-of-life care, takes place in the context of family relationships at a critical juncture.

Exploring his role as both a personal and professional caregiver, Maskalyk's narrative about his grandfather fleshes out the "short stories of people's lives" he encounters in his work and places the daily lives of individuals against the institutionalized life narratives ERs require. Here, the silencing of aging voices comes both from the literal inability for unconscious and dying patients to express their wishes in the emergency room and from challenges preventing the aged from living full, meaningful lives. Though medical advances often keep aging bodies functioning, Maskalyk suggests that as the body breaks down in multiple and complex ways, our attempts to help can sometimes hurt. Multiple specialists each "add a drug or two that they know well, and the person and their family doctor are stuck watching the list grow, reluctant to winnow any in case there is a benefit neither of them see" (34). When he allows his grandfather enough pain medication despite his kidney problems so "that he can stand at the stove"—because "tomorrow-bacon, not maybe-bacon three years from now" is one of the things that makes life worth living—Maskalyk highlights the need to balance longevity with quality of life (37).

Life on the Ground Floor is tense and immediate on one level and profoundly existential on another. As in the other books discussed here, time figures heavily; in this case, the focus is on the ephemerality of our relationships with the elderly and the certainty that all human life is finite. What is important is the connection made in the moment, whether it be the brief contact between a physician and their patient or the life-long relationship between family members. Maskalyk's story of his grandfather emphasizes that doctors must really "see" patients, to "recognize their hurt" instead of getting "caught up in parts of bodies" (88–89), and that families should cherish their time together. This recognition is what makes Black Lion Hospital remarkably like St. Michael's, despite differences in resources. Maskalyk's grandfather is on his mind in Addis Ababa as he treats patients, recognizing that a man who is a medical puzzle to him is also "someone's son, brother, father, husband, love. Grandfather" (57), and nursing his grandfather at the end of his life helps Maskalyk face his own mortality. Through a narration of the personal alongside the professional, Maskalyk's book negotiates both the profound loss we experience when someone close to us dies and the need to accept that this is the way of things. In the last lines of the book, Maskalyk

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panies his grandfather to the lawyer to finalize his will and recognizes e is ready to die and is waiting for his family to let go. "Life isn't just one neral, you know, Jim" is the final message he shares with his grandson Maskalyk shares with his reader: "It's full of living too, and for that, you have to wait" (248). Much has been made in Canadian media recently the strain our aging population represents for our social and economic tions. Maskalyk's book reminds readers that institutions are a contact for individuals who must recognize each other's rich and diverse experi- even, and especially, in challenging circumstances.

In various ways, all of the texts discussed here provide windows into the represented in census data about aging. They remind us that while our population has important implications for our institutions, it also rep- personal history, knowledge, and eventually a rather profound collec- loss. Describing her mother as a parent, Christakos notes, "She seemed e" (14). These books explore the shift in familial ground that occurs the seemingly endless love of a family member is proven finite by aging lness. In Maskalyk's words they pay "hard attention to the end of things" and as such they excavate a new national landscape in which a signifi- contingent of our population is nearing their end and the next genera- must consider how to negotiate our roles as caregivers and what remains our elders are gone.

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FAMILY MEMOIR, TO MEMORIALIZE AND TO INHERIT
THE YEAR IN CHINA

CHEN SHEN

In recent years, family memoirs have become a prevalent form of life writing in China. Such memoirs—which, as Rocío Davis explains in *Relative Histories*, can also be described as "'multigenerational' or 'intergenerational auto/biographies'"—have for the most part been written to memorialize and show respect for the authors' elders and ancestors. Many of these memoirs have been published every year, especially when the deceased person has been a celebrity.

Family memoirs have been popular in China because of Chinese traditions. Family is the cornerstone of traditional Chinese society and has even influenced the political structure of the constitution. Although family-oriented culture is not the foundation of today's national political structure, family is still very important in Chinese people's value systems. One of the reasons for this importance is because of how family memoirs preserve genealogies. In turn, genealogical research has also been an important part of Chinese history.

In the past, praising the merit and fame of deceased family members was so prevalent in memoirs it was almost a cliché. Publications from 2017 reveal new trends in this writing form: some authors have tried to reflect on public history through their family stories; others have tried to continue family traditions through tracing their parents' lives; and others still have tried to solve generational conflicts through their depiction of family members. Triggered by marketing factors, popular family memoirs now are still mainly written about famous family members. However, even when written about a famous person, memoirs from 2017 feature the "ordinary" side of extraordinary people. Many writers in 2017 tried to strip the social fame of their subjects and "restore" their nature as common people.

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One example of a family memoir that highlights the ordinary aspects ...ous people is *Yang Du Yyu Liang Qichao*, written by the couple Yang ...i and Wu Liming, who were grandchildren of the two subjects. Yang Du ...Liang Qichao were two very famous revolutionaries in China's modern ...y and, through marriage, became relatives of the authors. There have ...many biographies of Yang Du and Liang Qichao as individuals, but this ...is the first to give an account of their relationship with each other. Yang ...i and Wu Liming are scientists and, as they declare in their postscript, ...struggled to research their two grandfathers after they retired. What sets ...book apart from biographies of Yang Du and Liang Qichao is that the au... hoped to represent the two revolutionaries' legendary lives from grand...ren's perspectives, which shed new light on Yang Du and Liang Qichao's ...ical actions that otherwise were shrouded in mystery. For example, Yang ...was incomprehensible to many people since he once was in support of ... Shikai, who tried to proclaim himself emperor. In some historical tele... programs, Yang Du is even presented as Yuan's servile lackey. But Yang ...i believes that Yang Du did not really believe in Yuan Shikai, and he ...s from some detailed conversations at home to explain his judgment. ...sing such private details that could only be known by family members ...s the reader know the invisible part of the subjects' psychological world. ...book also provides a precious record of Yang Du and Liang Qichao's fam...mbers, especially stories of their wives, who were anonymous in many ...graphies, thereby drawing a more complete picture of their domestic, or...y lives.

Another example of this type of text is *Bu Yi Ben Se*, a family memoir ...u Pingbo that was written by Yu's grandchild, Wei Nai. Wei Nai lived ... Yu Pingbo when he was a child, so he is very familiar with Yu's every...ife and his personality. This book adds to a series of biographies Wei Nai ...written about his grandfather. Other than praising his grandfather's great ...evements in literature and scholarly research, he presents Yu Pingbo as a ...Yi," a commoner. Wei Nai provides picturesque descriptions along with ...dotes of Yu Pingbo with family and friends. For example, to present Yu's ...y and serene nature, Wei Nai recalls his childhood in his old house be... Yu's property was confiscated in the Cultural Revolution; Wei Nai also ...ds many detailed stories about the matrimonial life of Yu Pingbo and his ... Xu Baochuan to show how affectionate Yu was. Even when the author ...s about Yu's study of *Hong Long Meng* by telling stories of Yu Pingbo with ...friends, Fu Sinian, Gu Jigang, and others, the author not only indicates Yu ...gbo's dedication to his study of the classical novel *Hong Lou Meng* but also ...ls Yu's absolute passion for life. Although his achievements in literature

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resulted not only in Yu Pingbo's fame but also in his suffering in political movements, Wei Nai's text shows that Yu treasured pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy—all those common passions in life. In the eyes of Wei Nai, those common characteristics revealed the true nature of his grandfather.

Ding Ling Zhuan, a new biography of the author Ding Ling, also presents the ordinary side of a famous and much-written-about public figure. Although nearly twenty biographies of Ding Ling are already available, this book is by Ding Ling's son, who emphasizes Ding Ling's ordinary, domestic life. Most biographies of this woman writer present her achievements in literature and her legendary life as a woman revolutionary. However, this book provides information about her family life, which helps us get to know more about her background, especially her inner world, including her life as a mother. Jiang Zulin writes in detail about their family life after his father, Hu Yeping, died. Although Ding Ling was committed to her revolutionary ideals, she had to distance herself from her political work to protect her children. This decision was difficult, but Ding Ling went so far as to tell her children that she was wrong in conducting revolutionary activities. Although Ding Ling was an iron woman in the eyes of the public, she was a tenderhearted mother. Jiang Zulin also provides some new historical evidence to renew studies of Ding Ling. For example, the author comments on the relationship between Ding Ling and the writer Shen Congwen, which had been a mystery until now. Part memoir, this biography of his mother allowed Jiang Zulin himself to address his childhood trauma by exploring his mother's psychological world and imagining the reasoning behind her decisions. Ultimately, through writing this account, Jiang Zulin was able to understand his mother's decisions, rectify public judgment about Ding Ling, and make peace with the spirit of his mother.

Written by Ji Cheng, the son of Ji Xianlin, first published in 2010, and republished in 2016 as a new edition, *Wo He Fu Qin Ji Xianlin* provides another intimate perspective on a well-known man. Ji Xianlin was recognized as a great master of Eastern culture in China. Ji Xianlin's study on brahma-vidy, Buddhism, as well as Chinese culture was groundbreaking and influential. Ji Xianlin was admired by many Chinese people and recognized as a national treasure. However, in this family memoir written by his son, Ji Xianlin is portrayed as quite a different person. In Ji Cheng's telling, his father is a total failure as a husband and parent. Ji Cheng criticizes his father, saying that although he supported the family financially, he was never affectionate with his son. Though Ji Xianlin was a well-respected scholar, he was a ruthless father. Ji Xianlin was also a failed husband, according to his son, because of his loveless marriage. While Ji Cheng calls his father heartless, he also acknowledges that

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anlin grew up like an orphan. His mother passed away when Ji Xianlin oung, and he had a lonely childhood and learned to repress his feelings. ite Ji Cheng's ability to sympathize with his father like this, the news ed that Ji Cheng and Ji Xianlin had a dispute about inheritance suc- on. Although they are said to have reconciled before Ji Xianlin's death in , from this second edition of the text we find generational conflicts that ill unresolved in the son's heart. We cannot say whether Ji Cheng could understand his father's inner life, but this text makes clear that Ji Cheng caught in blind worship of the master.

In addition to the narratives above that emphasize relational connections een famous elders and the descendants who author these texts, family oirs have also mediated both history and cultural memory. As Davis s, when personal narratives are inserted into the public forum to engage ical and cultural issues, they challenge dominant mainstream views, h have often hidden, misrepresented, or invalidated ethnic history ("Me- g" 493). For example, Qi Bangyuan's *Jyu Liu He*, which was published 010, provoked public discussion for years. David Der-Wei Wang com- s that the reason for Jvu Liu He's popularity is that Qi Bangyuan not recalls her personal life in the memoir, but also reflects on historical de- pment in her two homelands, Northeast China and Taiwan (159).

In 2017, Dai Xiaohua gave us another memoir that sheds light on under- sented moments in Chinese history. Dai Xiaohua is a Malaysian Chinese r and worked to promote cultural communication between Malaysia China all her life. She was born in Taiwan, and her ancestral home was ebei, on the Chinese mainland. Her family memoir, *Hu Ru Gui*, details family story after her parents moved to Taiwan in 1949. Her mother's motivated Dai Xiaohua to trace back her family history. As she declares r postscript, she spent nearly twenty years collecting materials and in- wing insiders from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan to reveal family's true history (243). Dai Xiaohua narrates her mother's funeral af- and her efforts to send her mother's remains to their homeland to fulfill mother's wish to return home after death. Dai Xiaohua also recalls their y experience in Taiwan, including a substantial account of the miserable rience of the author's younger brother, Dai Huaguang, in the People's ration Front. Dai Huaguang was accused of being a spy by the Taiwanese nment because he expressed his support for the Communist Party. He taken into custody on Green Island for ten years. Dai Huaguang repre- d a generation of young people in Taiwan in 1970s. With suspicion of Nationalist Party's policy and fear of White Terror, they worried about the e and developed interests in the political policy of Mainland China, even

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promoting reunification of both coasts, which provoked the government's repression. The family encountered hardship because of Dai Huaguang's political avocation. Looking back on her family sufferings, Dai Xiaohua reflects on the complicated relationship between Taiwan and Mainland China and also on the topics of nationalism and patriotism. Dai's family's personal experience contributes a deeper understanding of this phase of history, which is largely unknown to Mainland Chinese.

Another recently published family memoir is *Guan Yu Wo Fu Mu De Yi Qie*, which Nan Fan wrote to memorialize his parents. Through describing their experience from the 1920s to the 1980s, Nan Fan covers a long history of social upheaval, including the May Fourth Movement, the Anti-Japanese War, the founding of the People's Republic of China, years of political movement, and the economic reform and opening up in the 1980s. Nan Fan's parents were ordinary but very typical in that period of history, for their fate was bonded with historical developments. Nearly every step of historical change made a great impact on their family life. Nan Fan's mother hoped to live a peaceful life, and his father was enthusiastic about revolution from a young age. However, most of their life was spent in anxiety, and they suffered difficulties in every political movement. Censorship and imprisonment threw Nan Fan's father into a deep depression. The relentless upheavals of their lives turned Nan Fan's parents from aspiring youths into traumatized old people. Nan Fan's descriptions and personal experience enrich our understanding of these periods of history.

Recently, a number of significant memoirs covering the history of war and political movements in China have been published. For example, Wu Ningkun's *A Single Tear* recalls the author's suffering in China after 1949, including his reeducation through laboring in the Great Northern Wilderness in northeast China and the Anhui province. By writing about his life at that time, Wu Ningkun inspires future generations to remember this pivotal historical period. In a sense, Nan Fan fulfilled Wu Ningkun's hope. Thus, memorializing stories of former generations is a good way to remember history and preserve cultural memory.

From the family memoirs published this year, we can see a growing trend in life writing in China: to uncover the true inner worlds of biographical subjects. Writers now have the courage to face and reflect upon the complicated histories they have endured. While eulogizing ancestors' fame and achievement may be a way to show respect and admiration, tracing the trajectory of their lives to understand their choices is a better way to memorialize people who are now gone.

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MEMORIAS DE GUERRA Y PAZ
EL AÑO EN COLOMBIA

GABRIEL JAIME MURILLO-ARANGO

"Memories of War and Peace: The Year in Colombia." Colombia's major political event between 2016 and 2017, and the one most likely to have the longest-lasting impact, was the signing of the peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). This agreement suffered a hard setback at the polls when citizens voted against this agreement by a narrow margin. The rejection of this peace deal provoked a spontaneous reaction of thousands of pacifists who responded to the artist Doris Salcedo's call to knit an immense canvas as a tribute for war victims. This canvas was installed and displayed for one day in Plaza Bolívar in Bogotá. A narrative production flows between the two events, expressed in life stories, biographical interviews, and records of acts of barbarism, where an authentic duel of testimonies about war and peace takes place.

A nadie debe sorprender que el tortuoso proceso de paz que condujo finalmente a la firma del Acuerdo general para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera entre las *FARC* (antes Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, ahora convertido en el partido político Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común) y el Estado colombiano a finales de 2016, hubiese impreso un sello preferencial en la narrativa testimonial e incrementado la polifonía de memorias y relatos autobiográficos en los más variados registros. Así como en la década anterior se asistió a un auge en la narrativa de testimonios de secuestrados y víctimas de las fuerzas insurgentes, este año vio consolidarse las narrativas de víctimas de la guerra. En uno u otro lado se percibe la tradición de un género "anfibio" que traspasa las fronteras de las disciplinas académicas e incide en las tensiones que enfrentan la historia y la memoria. Las memorias no se expresan en relatos homogéneos ni con pretensiones de objetividad y neutralidad, ni son proclives a la reconstrucción de los hechos del pasado, sino más bien ensayan la forma de rastrear las

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…s de la experiencia vivida, es decir, las vivencias que desvelan la presencia …del pasado en el presente. Las consecuencias de poder distinguir ambos …ptos implica una actitud por parte del narrador, que toma conciencia de …o el pasado se convierte en memoria cuando es apropiado e interpretado …a perspectiva de futuro.

…En esta línea se sitúan las narrativas de los protagonistas de un proceso ex…tido a lo largo de cinco años, que inicia con las confesiones del hermano …presidente, Enrique Santos, exdirector del diario *El Tiempo* y gestor en …mbra del acercamiento definitivo entre las partes, en *Así empezó todo: el …er cara a cara secreto entre el gobierno y las FARC en las conversaciones de La …ana*. Poco después apareció *El hombre clave* de Henry Acosta que revela …secretos mejor guardados por parte del empresario que sirviera de enlace …e la comandancia guerrillera y los últimos gobiernos comprometidos en …egociaciones de paz, y que goza de una celebrada fama de prudencia …to diplomático. Debe ser mencionada también la entrevista concedida …l general en retiro Óscar Naranjo al reconocido hombre de radio Julio …ñez, publicada con el subtítulo *El general de las mil batallas*, quien hizo …te de la comisión negociadora oficial y hoy ocupa la vicepresidencia de la …ública con funciones específicas de coordinar la estrategia de gobierno en …pos del posconflicto.

…Por el bando contrario, el máximo comandante de las *FARC* accede a su …era entrevista en profundidad en *Timochenko, el último guerrillero*. En …declara que preferiría ser recordado en la posteridad no como tal líder, ni …era como adalid del proceso de paz, sino más bien como revolucionario …da la vida. Su retrato es el de un espartano; esto es, solo un individuo …as vislumbrado tras la imagen de un colectivo, la *guerrillerada*, donde la …acía recae en la primera persona plural en vez de la primera persona sin…r. La entrevista fue realizada por un amigo de adolescencia, también él …agonista de los procesos de paz durante los años recientes, reconocido ac…a y dirigente fundador del Centro de Consultoría en Derechos Humanos …splazamiento (CODHES). Además de la del informante principal, el au…Jorge Rojas realizó numerosas entrevistas a distintos personajes de la vida …ica, afectos o no al proceso de paz, como también a gentes del común que …an en las zonas de conflicto. Así mismo pudo explorar fuentes documen…s primarias, tales como la correspondencia inédita entre los dos coman…es fundadores de la guerrilla, ya desaparecidos a causa de muerte natural, …ijo y Jacobo Arenas.

…Un incidente inesperado, que puso un acento dramático al proceso de …stigación del libro, consistió en el descubrimiento *ex post facto* de que el …ante de las graves heridas infligidas con arma de fuego a su padre años …, entonces enrolado en una banda paramilitar al servicio del régimen

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conservador, había sido precisamente Tirofijo. He aquí un motivo excepcional, aprovechado por el autor para discurrir acerca de las condiciones de reproducción de la violencia en Colombia a lo largo de varias generaciones que nunca antes han visto de cerca el rostro de la paz.

Sin embargo, todavía hoy, al cabo de un año de la firma y legitimación política del Acuerdo de Paz, los asesinatos de representantes civilistas y de reinsertados a la sociedad señalan una tendencia en auge, al tiempo que arrecia la oposición de amplios sectores movilizados para "hacer trizas los acuerdos de paz", según las palabras de un destacado líder de la derecha agrupada en el Centro Democrático. Frente a semejante relación de fuerzas tan inestable y polarizada, en mi memoria conservo el exordio de *La guerra no tiene rostro de mujer*: "Nunca hemos vivido de otra manera, debe ser que no sabemos hacerlo. No nos imaginamos cómo es vivir de otro modo, y nos llevará mucho tiempo aprenderlo" (Alexiévich 12).

Alfredo Molano Bravo comparte con los narradores citados un interés común en abordar el asunto complejo del tránsito de una estrategia de crítica de las armas a una política basada en las armas de la crítica. En su nuevo trabajo, *A lomo de mula*, vuelve a los orígenes de la guerrilla de las *FARC* nucleada en torno a grupos de autodefensa armada de campesinos despojados de sus tierras y bienes, que huyen de los bombardeos de la fuerza aérea en el recóndito valle de Marquetalia situado en el corazón del país, cincuenta años atrás. En el libro se describe el surgimiento de estos grupos de resistencia campesina de diversa procedencia, más luego cobijados por el Partido Comunista, seguido del periodo de expansión influenciado por el narcotráfico y otras fuentes ilegales de financiación desde los años ochenta, sin dejar de recurrir de forma intermitente a intentos de negociación con el Estado que atraviesan 17 gobiernos sucesivos. Tal como es característico de su narrativa, por estas páginas Molano cabalga a lomo de mula hacia los lugares más inhóspitos en busca de testimonios de los sobrevivientes o testigos o víctimas, que cuentan sus historias de colonos en lucha permanente por hacerse un sitio en la geografía nacional.

En las postrimerías de 2016, Alfredo Molano recibió el Premio Simón Bolívar de Periodismo como reconocimiento a una vida y obra consagrada a revelar el rostro de una nación velado y vedado en las narrativas dominantes del poder, el rostro de los colonos, los pobres del campo, los desplazados y desterrados. Nadie como él ha recorrido a pie, calzado con sus infaltables *Converse*, y a lomo de mula o en chalupa o *chiva*, los ignorados paisajes de una Colombia diversa, donde han buscado refugio millones de campesinos pobres despojados de sus tierras mejoradas y obligados cada vez a expandir la frontera agrícola, la misma que va señalando como una cinta métrica los límites cambiantes de la guerra y la paz en los territorios.

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La narrativa de Molano se caracteriza por moldear un testimonio a partir
ecuperar los detalles de las modulaciones del habla, los gestos y las mira-
que delinean el rostro de sus interlocutores, gente perdedora o arrojada a
márgenes de la sociedad, sin descuidar el trazado de un horizonte temporal
larga duración, de donde resulta un género mestizo como son sus historias
da a caballo entre la creación literaria, la crónica periodística, la historia
la sociología. Al cabo de tantas décadas de travesías por sus libros, docu-
ales, crónicas y columnas de prensa, la escritura se ha ido decantando en
frontera difusa entre las historias de vida y la autobiografía, donde anida
cognita de saber quién habla, si es la voz de quien rinde el testimonio o
ién escucha y luego transcribe.
La guerra irregular que es vista con "naturalidad" en un escenario rural
bién tiene su propia historia de presencia en las ciudades, donde se en-
a con formas disímiles de violencia urbana que son portadoras de otras
s motivos, actores y matices culturales. Aquí se mezclan las pandillas,
os o bandas de jóvenes sicarios al servicio del narcotráfico y de cuanta
riminal les ofrezca un beneficio inmediato y pírrico, con una miríada de
os de *milicianos* que disputan el control de territorios donde ejercer un
n social restrictivo de la movilidad de personas extrañas en los barrios, del
po, la distribución de bienes de consumo e incluso de la regulación de la
privada de los vecinos. Estas son las historias de *No nacimos pa' semilla*,
imer libro publicado en 1990 por Alonso Salazar, quien dos décadas más
e ejerció el cargo de alcalde de Medellín, al que siguió con las biografías
ectivas de un victimario y su víctima, la del tristemente célebre *capo* Pablo
bar, *La parábola de Pablo: auge y caída de un gran capo del narcotráfico*, y
l inmolado candidato a la presidencia por el partido liberal, *Profeta del*
ro: vida y muerte de Luis Carlos Galán.
Recién en agosto 2017, este mismo autor publicó *No hubo fiesta: crónicas*
revolución y la contrarrevolución, un libro-mosaico de retratos de compa-
s de viaje en la universidad de finales del siglo alistados en grupos arma-
rebeldes, durante una época de recrudecimiento del proceso de descom-
ión social, la degradación de las condiciones de ejercicio de la acción
ica y la intensificación de las violencias múltiples esparcidas por los barrios
lares de Medellín. El destino final de estas vidas truncadas ilustra tanto
caso histórico de la vía armada idealizada entre sectores de izquierda en
o una opción de poder, como el imperativo ético-político de encarar
éma de hacer "memoria ejemplar" del pasado o persistir en el eterno re-
o de una "memoria literal", si hacemos uso de los términos de Tzvetan
orov. Sin dejar de homenajear en su memoria a los muertos cercanos, el
r ejerce como testigo de momentos excepcionales del tiempo pasado, no

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con el propósito de contar los recuerdos de su vida sino más bien de tirar del hilo conductor de los relatos, que es la historia de las ilusiones perdidas de una generación que sucumbió al romanticismo revolucionario.

Un foco de atención principal en los estudios sociales de Colombia contemporánea sigue siendo Medellín y sus historias de violencia desde los años ochenta del siglo pasado: un cuadro complejo con presencia de grupos paramilitares, guerrillas, bandas de sicarios al servicio de narcotraficantes y agentes del Estado, a los que corresponden objetivos, formas de actuar y grados de impacto, el cual representa todo un desafío a los paradigmas de interpretación más recurrentes. Entre los publicados recientemente sobresale *Medellín: memorias de una guerra urbana*, un estudio sobre los actores, territorios y las formas de violencia que asolaron la ciudad entre 1980 y 2014 y que toma en cuenta las formas de resistencia social y cultural desarrolladas por sus habitantes al socaire de la dinámica de una guerra urbana, múltiple y cambiante. La senda ya había sido abierta, dos años atrás, gracias a un exhaustivo estudio cualitativo titulado *Medellín: tragedia y resurrección. Mafias, ciudad y Estado. 1975–2013*, seguido casi al par de *Muertos cercanos*, en apariencia una encuesta sociológica como otras, pero que en el fondo nos cuestiona sobre el estado de "naturalización" de la muerte y la violencia entre los ciudadanos de a pie que accedieron a responder la pregunta: "¿Cuál es la persona más cercana que le fue asesinada?"

El Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH), fundado por sentencia de la corte constitucional en 2006, solo en 2011 adquiere la autonomía administrativa y el blindaje jurídico necesario para hacer frente al conjunto de actividades y programas en las áreas de producción académica, comunicaciones, artes y narrativas. En torno suyo se erige, además, el Museo de la Memoria en Bogotá, que tiene la misión de ejercer la función integradora del sinnúmero de iniciativas locales y regionales de guarda de la memoria y restitución de la dignidad de las víctimas de la guerra vivida en Colombia durante más de cincuenta años. El CNMH es de lejos la entidad investigadora con mayor volumen de producción de informes de caso, bases de datos, compilación de iniciativas locales, museos y casas de memoria, cuya variedad de canales de divulgación la hace captadora de un público más amplio de los que suele cubrir la "industria cultural", comprometida con las narrativas de la memoria histórica y la exploración de la verdad con fines de restitución de la dignidad y los derechos de las víctimas. Así, en el curso del presente año se han multiplicado los trabajos publicados por el CNMH sobre el tema álgido de la tenencia de la tierra, que constituye precisamente la piedra angular de la historia de las guerrillas en el campo, recogidos en el volumen *Campesinos de tierra y agua*, al que se agregan los relacionados con las zonas de colonización y de cultivos ilícitos, más la continua divulgación de investigaciones sobre

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emblemáticos, aquí entendidos como las masacres y actos de barbarie tidos por todas las fuerzas armadas en disputa. En esta dirección se han a conocer, entre otros, *Memorias de la infamia: desaparición forzada en el lena Medio*, que reúne el análisis de testimonios de familiares de víctien 128 casos de desaparición forzada ocurridos en diez municipios de la n central del país. *En honor a su memoria: víctimas del Bloque Norte de las en el Caribe colombiano* es resultado de una sentencia judicial a favor de aración simbólica de las víctimas de acciones paramilitares, al amparo de 975 de 2005 conocida como Ley de Justicia y Paz y que ordena divulgar rfiles biográficos de 93 personas asesinadas a manos de paramilitares en áreas rurales de la costa norte de Colombia.

Ha sido preocupación constante del CNMH acercar los medios de comuión a la gente, como se puede ver con la creación de sendos programas les salidos al aire en el último año. En *Ojalá nos alcance la vida*, realizado l CNMH con apoyo del gobierno de Canadá y OIM (Organización Inacional de Migraciones), se recopilan historias de vida de adultos mayores das de penas del duelo, pero también de tenacidad y esperanza de las mas del conflicto armado en Colombia. Las historias de desterrados a de la guerra, exponentes del drama de un amplio sector de la población sitúa a Colombia en el primer lugar de víctimas del desplazamiento en rica Latina, quedan plasmadas en *Las voces del exilio colombiano: memo- de colombianos en el exterior*. Igualmente a través de las ondas radiales se mite una adaptación del informe *¡Basta ya! Memorias de guerra y dignidad* programa *La vida cuenta*.

Si el acontecimiento político del año (que se haría extensivo, probable-te, a un período de larga duración) fue la firma del Acuerdo general para rminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera las *FARC* y el gobierno de Juan Manuel Santos, el acontecimiento esté- tuvo como escenario la Plaza Bolívar de Bogotá con la instalación *Suman- ausencias* de la escultora Doris Salcedo. Mediante el despliegue de una in- sa tela que cubría toda la superficie de la plaza, símbolo de la República, n inscritos con ceniza los nombres de poco más de dos mil víctimas de erra, puestos ahí en el centro de la vida política gracias a una comunidad ra de alrededor de diez mil personas, forjada al cabo de dos días como reacción artística sin violencia a la violencia imaginada tras el triunfo in- ado del "No" en el plebiscito convocado en respaldo del acuerdo de paz ado en La Habana. Entonces el acontecimiento político se tornó en un ecimiento de duelo, y este en un ritual para honrar a los ausentes, víctide la guerra, mediante la escritura de sus nombres no con tinta indeleble con ceniza, pues a pesar de su naturaleza frágil y volátil, la ceniza es la de lo que alguna vez existió pero vuelve a nosotros a través del recuerdo.

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Dicha instalación se suma a la serie *Acciones de duelo* característica de Salcedo, aunque parece sugerir una evolución en el trabajo de la artista, considerando las esculturas anteriores en las que el significado residía en la instalación de objetos y muebles como cifras de memoria, mientras ahora el peso del significado se traslada a los nombres. Una intuición confirmada justo un año después con ocasión de la instalación *Palimpsesto* en el Palacio de Cristal del Museo Reina Sofía de Madrid. En una intrincada combinación de arte, verdad y tecnología, el espectador participa de un recorrido cauteloso sobre el suelo arenisco del Palacio de donde fluyen gotas de agua que trenzan los nombres de centenares de hombres y mujeres ahogados en el mar Mediterráneo, en el intento mortal por alcanzar las costas de una Europa insolidaria e intransigente. La puesta en escena evoca el significante *Palimpsesto* en cuanto designa un manuscrito antiguo que conserva huellas de una escritura anterior borrada artificialmente, como de hecho fueron borradas las vidas de quienes no merecieron tan siquiera un nicho como sepultura. Pero la memoria se preserva en virtud de una poética del duelo elaborada a lo largo de una trayectoria artística consagrada a enfrentar la violencia política constitutiva del *ethos* de la sociedad contemporánea.

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ANTOINE J. MADURO
THE YEAR IN CURAÇAO

ROSE MARY ALLEN AND JEROEN HEUVEL

This is an essay about an autobiography published in 2015 on the island of Curaçao. This island lies just to the north of Venezuela and, together with Aruba and Bonaire, they are called the Dutch Leeward islands or the ABC islands.[1] The literary scene in Curaçao has known several biographies during the past ten years. Most of the time, these biographies are much more about men than about women. As women have been confined to the household, they have not been expected to have lived a life worth writing about. Historically, women have internalized this belief. Fortunately, women have slowly stopped silencing themselves in that particular way.

Nevertheless, despite this welcome progress in the production of women's biographies on the island, in this article we also address another trend in the autobiographies of Curaçao, that of non-upper-class life portraits, as exemplified by an autobiography published in late 2015 by Antoine J. Maduro (1909–1997). As it reconstructs the social environment of his life, from his youth until his death, Maduro's autobiography also gives an insight into twentieth-century Curaçaoan society.

Antoine J. Maduro initiated his own autobiography with a clear goal in mind. On the day of his eightieth birthday in 1989, Maduro reflected on the autobiographical notes that he had written throughout the years and wrote a letter to a former librarian named Daphne M. van Schendel-Labega. He stated that these notes might be of use to teach the younger generation how to deal with matters they face in life. He sustained his thought by using a Dutch proverb, "Wie niet hoort naar goede raad, beklaagt het te laat" [they who do not listen to good advice will complain when it is too late]. A few years before, in 1985, the librarian had suggested that Maduro start writing his autobiography (van Schendel-Labega 6). Perhaps this question had been occupying Maduro's mind when, in a letter dated January 29, 1986, he wrote back to

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Schendel-Labega that he did not wish to be the author of his own biog-
y but that he would send her on a regular basis some notes about himself
ste could transform into a historical novel (Maduro, Letter 7). Until Au-
1994, three years before his death, he would faithfully send her the notes.
Schendel-Labega found his notes so unique, so well chosen, and the use
e local creole language Papiamentu so colorful that she decided not to
ite them but to use his texts almost verbatim as the basis for the publica-
. Her task then became that of editor and ghostwriter. Unfortunately, af-
long illness, van Schendel-Labega died in 2012 and could not complete
sk. Thus, the Fundashon Instituto Raúl Römer, a foundation aimed at
rching the language Papiamentu, took over the project. Through the ef-
of its president, Sidney Joubert, this autobiography was finally published
book under the title *Bida, remordementu, konfeshon i krítika*. As this book
sed on Maduro's own texts, it is considered an autobiography and not a
graphy.

It was the intention to write this book in the Dutch language, but later
as decided to write it in Papiamentu. This was a sensible thing to do. The
k consists of three hundred pages written in excellent Papiamentu and is
fore a considerable asset to well-written publications in Papiamentu at
ademic level. Another reason that justifies this autobiography in Papia-
ntu is the fact that Maduro was a strong advocate of the recognition of the
iamentu language in its own right and of its proper use, next to that of
h, the colonial and official language of Curaçao, Aruba, and Bonaire.[2]
is life time, he had to compete against negative ideas and attitudes about
matter and sometimes his struggle seemed to be similar to that of Don
ote, the ingenious nobleman. The cover of Maduro's book reflects this
gle and is based on a drawing of the ethnographer and artist Elis Juliana
27–2013), who was influential in the fields of ethnography, literature, ar-
logy, and the visual and performing arts. Drawn in Juliana's typical poin-
m technique, the cover features a knight defending himself with a shield
hich the term orthography is written and armed with a sharp lance figu-
ely directed at spelling mistakes.

As mentioned before, the autobiography gives an in-depth understanding
wentieth-century Curaçao. It starts with the family history of Maduro, the
of a Curaçaoan police officer. While his mother came from the island of
a, Maduro himself was born on the other Dutch island of Aruba, but soon
r his birth, his parents came to live again in Curaçao.

From 1916 to 1922 Maduro attended a Catholic primary school named
Jozefschool in the neighborhood of Pietermaai, which was run by the
tholic friars for the so-called *skol di pòrnada* (non-fee-paying school). It
s a school for boys only. Maduro very often mentions the Roman Catholic

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Church in his autobiography. From the nineteenth century, the Church had become the primary institution exercising authority and control over the lives of working-class people of the island. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Church had successfully established its position as a driving force in their social life, through in particular the education of young women and men (see Allen, *Di Ki Manera*).

When Maduro was ten years old, his father suddenly died at the age of thirty-eight from heart failure. His death impacted Maduro greatly. The family of three, his mother and her two children, fell into poverty. They had to move into the home of his late father's parents in another neighborhood called Montebèrdè, which was situated near the capital of Willemstad. There they lived with six people in a very small house, which was also in bad condition. His mother got a meager monthly widow's pension.

His school period is vividly described in his autobiography. Maduro wrote about each of the classes he attended and gave some insights into the teaching method during the colonial time. He described how he was taught Dutch. His description gives us a clear idea of how in that period, the school system was very much alienated from the real world of children of the Curaçaoan working class (see Donk).

Of all the memories of his school, his fifth grade in Friar August Biemans's class was an unforgettable one. This particular friar dedicated a lot of his time to soccer and singing. They even had an organ in their classroom on which the friar would accompany them when they sang Dutch school songs, with titles like "t Zonnetje gaat van ons scheiden Hef de riemen hoog" (The sun is departing from us), "Plas ze neer in 't water" (Lift the belts up high, and put them down in the water), "Vlug ter been snel ik heen" (Quickly and fast I will go), and "Weet gij hoeveel sterren gloeien" (Do you know how many stars are glowing). Maduro knew these songs by heart and could still sing them at an old age, when, for example, he was preparing his food. In his autobiography, he also used songs as a tool for nationalism. For example, he transcribed the lyrics of "Het lied van Kòrsou" to preserve it for posterity. This song expresses feelings of patriotism toward the island. The first of the song's three stanzas runs as follows:

Fier rijst uit wilde golven
Mijn klein en lief Kòrsou,
Het land waar ik wil wonen,
waar ik zoveel van hou.
Ik heb U lief, Uw zee, Uw strand,
Uw rotsen en Uw heuvelland.
Fier rijst uit wilde golven
Mijn klein en lief Kòrsou. (25)

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Rising proudly from wild waves
My little and sweet Curaçao,
The country where I want to live,
That I love so much
I love you, your sea, your beach,
Your rocks and your hills
Rising proudly from wild waves
My little and sweet Curaçao.]

Maduro finished his primary school, one of the friars asked him whether would like go to a fee-paying secondary school. Maduro considered dilemma. As the oldest son, he would be better off earning some money support his poverty-stricken family. However, the friar assured his mother as a diligent and intelligent student, Maduro would not have to pay fees. After he graduated from the so-called St. Thomas College, a well-known secondary school on the island, the friars helped Maduro find a job the recently established oil company, Royal Dutch Shell, an act for which Maduro also showed his gratitude in his autobiography.

Maduro's autobiography also gives insight into Curaçao's social life after establishment of Royal Dutch Shell, which in the mid-twentieth century came an oil refinery. The establishment of the oil company in 1915 on the land, after oil was discovered in the nearby country of Venezuela in the Lake Maracaibo, marked the start of the industrial era of the society. When the company established itself on the island, it faced labor shortages and a large numbers of workers were imported from Venezuela, Madeira, Suriname, and the English-speaking Caribbean, both from what were then called the British West Indies as well as the English-speaking Dutch Windward Islands (see Allen, "Towards"). Jaap van Soest, who published his groundbreaking book *Olie en water*, on the Curaçaoan economy in the first half of the twentieth century, states that the oil refinery became the largest employer of the island after 1918. In 1929, of the 44,344 inhabitants of the island, about 10,924 persons were working for the oil refinery. This number would reach its peak in 1952, when the oil refinery employed 12,631 workers. The oil company also created many ancillary economic activities leading to a period of economic development on the island. The influx of people from different parts of the world also created new social dynamics in the Curaçaoan society.

Maduro's life, like many of the young men's lives in those days, was directly influenced by the socioeconomic dynamics of that time. In August 1926, he went to work at the correspondence department of the oil company or for "the Shell" as it was popularly called. Initially, he went to work as a typist, for which he was offered a salary of fifty guilders (about twenty-eight dollars

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US) a month. A few months later his salary increased by thirty percent, to the great relief of his mother, who also depended on the money for her living. Advised by Friar Frater Gerontius, Maduro did his exams in English and Spanish correspondence two years later in 1928 at the Association of Languages and Commercial Correspondence in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands.

Maduro worked at the oil refinery from 1926 until 1960 and underscored the fact that the Dutch expatriate workers in the company had more privileges than the local workers. In a way, the refinery had overtaken the traditional power position of the old estate-owning elite. When Maduro questioned this injustice, the director of the Shell, W. van Eijck, told him that because the Shell was a Dutch company, it was logical that the Dutch had more privilege.

Maduro remembered how he had to struggle to get a promotion. At the end of 1942, Maduro was married with three children—and with number four on its way—and had reached the top stage of his salary, which was 250 guilders a month (or about 142 dollars US). He was working forty-seven hours a week. There were even periods when the correspondence department had to work extra hours in the evenings without any compensation for overtime.

Maduro expressed little appreciation for Shell as an employer. At Maduro's twenty-fifth anniversary working for Shell, the managing director had decided to cancel the five-hundred-guilder bonus that had been a regular token of appreciation for workers who had worked for a quarter of a century for the oil company. Five years later, on his thirtieth anniversary, again there was no bonus. During his thirty-four years of service at Shell, Maduro never received a Christmas bonus, nor a thirteenth-month salary, which was the case for workers working in other companies. However, he was a fighter who did not give up so quickly in life.

Beyond his career with Shell, Maduro made a name for himself in other ways. When he left Shell in 1957, Maduro passed his exams to qualify as a Spanish-language interpreter. Maduro was a very committed person and he stood at the cradle of several soccer unions, the most famous one being the Sport Unie Brion Trappers (SUBT). For this role in soccer, a football stadium in Willemstad, with a capacity for seven thousand spectators, was named after him. He also directed the men's choir of the Roman Catholic Church of Steenrijk for a long while. Also in his lifetime, Maduro wrote more than thirty publications on the subject of Papiamentu. For his outstanding contribution to the Papiamentu language, he received an honorary doctorate degree (doctor honoris causa) in 1984 at what was then called the University of the Netherlands Antilles, now the University of Curaçao.

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The autobiography *Bida, remordementu, konfeshon i krítika* is a must-read for anyone who wants to know more about the twentieth-century Dutch Caribbean history of Curaçao. One can state that the autobiography is one of the most thoroughgoing twenty-first-century publications in Papiamentu that covers the historical period of Curaçao from 1914 to 1994. By documenting his own personal and professional experiences in his life story, Maduro has been able to shed some light on the social dynamics of religion, industrialization, and urbanization along with its influence on the social life of the working-class population in Curaçao. We hope that one day the book will be translated into English so that it can be read by a wider international audience.

NOTES

On October 10, 2010, Curaçao, one of the five islands of the former Dutch Caribbean federation called the Netherlands Antilles, changed its constitutional status. The Netherlands Antilles were dismantled and ceased to exist. The two largest islands, Curaçao and Sint Maarten, each became self-governing entities or "countries" with their own direct ties to the Netherlands, while the three smallest islands, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba, each became overseas municipalities and integral parts of the Netherlands. All five islands remained part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in one form or another, but separately; interisland cooperation of varying intensity continues in some administrative fields.

The Papiamentu language is a creole language spoken on the island of Curaçao, but also on Aruba and Bonaire. In Curaçao it has a long history of being spoken by all the social classes and ethnic groups in the society. Documents from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries show that it was already spoken by the local Dutch in their communication with the local Sephardic Jews and with the enslaved and free African descendants. Papiamentu contains words from various languages, including Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English, and African and Amerindian languages.

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WOMEN IN THE MARGINS, OR NOT?
THE YEAR IN FINLAND

MAARIT LESKELÄ-KÄRKI

2017 marks the hundredth anniversary of Finland's independence, media ...erage on literature and art depicting the history of Finland has grown, in-...ing the country's biographies. In August, the biggest newspaper in Fin-..., *Helsingin Sanomat*, revealed how unbalanced the publishing of biogra-...s has been. The article claims that out of fifty-six published biographies ...autumn, only six were about women (Kanerva). Instead of concentrating ...e question of *why* big publishing houses are primarily publishing biog-...es about men, including former presidents (like C. G. E. Mannerheim), ...smen, politicians, and other present-day people, the *Helsingin Sanomat* ...e leaves women authors and biographies of women aside. The pictures ...e article depict those men who have been written about—and another ...re gallery does represent women, but only present-day women (including ..., business leaders, artists), and not historical women. Thus it totally ne-...s those marvelous, highly scholarly biographies of women that have been ...ished this year. As it bases the information only on the catalogues of big ...shers, it also leaves many biographies of women unmentioned. And it ...s not take into account the hybrid genre of biography, but gathers every-...g (including memoirs of present-day politicians, interview books on ath-...s and pop idols, scholarly biographies, and autobiographical books) under ...genre heading.

After reading the *Helsingin Sanomat* article, I decided to write a letter ...e editor to ask whether we should think more about the genre of biog-...y and the historical and gendered context of writing biographies rather ...n concentrate on reconstructing biography as a genre for and about men. ...uldn't we ask why the publishers are so eager to publish biographies on ...by men and to promote them? As biography has historically been the ...e of those who are seen as remarkable and worthy of attention, we should ...areful in analyzing our cultural memory and ask whom do we remember

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and whom do we write about in our present-day culture. What was striking was that the original article by *Helsingin Sanomat* hid behind an answer from a smaller publisher, Docendo, and reprinted the words of its publishing editor: "We just have to understand that, in fact, there just are fewer and less interesting women historically" (Kanerva). He even proclaimed that biographies on women are not being offered to publishers. I would have preferred that the journalist had studied this question more closely and asked why this undervaluation and underrepresentation of women's lives continues to exist.

During the past couple of years, two of my colleagues have written biographies on historical women. It was hard for them to find a publisher, and in the end they placed their books with very small publishing houses run by one or two people. Such anecdotes tell a lot about the situation of publishing biographies on women and makes one too aware of the politics of publishing—especially when historical literature is at stake. Historical books and biographies are among the most-read nonfiction literature in Finland, and biographies in particular are favored by women readers. Why is it, then, so hard to publish biographies of important historical women?

This we need to ask again and again, and be careful when analyzing the literature that is being published, particularly in a small country like Finland. At the turn of the 2000s, Danish biographer Birgitte Possing assessed women's presence in biographical literature. She noticed that "92% of all reviewed historical biographies in Europe and in the US had male protagonists, and the 96% were written by male biographers. Thus, only 4% of the reviewed biographies were written by women, while just 8% had a female protagonist—and these women were either religious figures, queens or feminists" (Possing, *Historical* 1213–15). This imbalance persists today, although women's history has been one important field where biographical research has been developing since the 1980s. In my own book, *Toisten elämät: Kirjoituksia elämäkerroista*, which was published in September 2017, I aim at depicting the history of Finnish biographical tradition from the perspective of women biographers from the early 1800s onward. The book is a statement on the importance of gender analysis in both writing and studying biographies. It was a coincidence that the book was published this autumn, at the same time as the public discussion on biographies has been lively. Together with a dance company that was premiering a show called *Kymmenen laulua naisesta* that aims at depicting the history of Finland through ten real-life and fictional stories of women, I organized a series of discussions in my hometown, Turku, to promote biographies on historical women artists and writers written by women. The discussion on the gender imbalance in biographies has continued throughout the autumn as the discussion particularly in social media has addressed male

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...nance on book shelves in book stores. Many people, including myself, ...been posting pictures from various book shops that have displayed only ...graphies of men, and the discussion around these postings has flourished ...rious feminist and literary circles.

...s an extension of those efforts, I want to devote the remainder of this ...e to some of those biographies on and by women that were published ...year.

WOMEN IN HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHIES, 2017

...o are the women who have been depicted in biographies that were pub-...ed in Finland this past year? During spring 2017, a biography of former ...sident Mauno Koivisto's spouse, Tellervo Koivisto (1929–), was published ...Anne Mattson. Tellervo Koivisto was also an MP during the 1970s, but ...ced most of her life to her husband's career. Still, she has a very indepen-...t and powerful public image. Tellervo Koivisto is now in her eighties, and ...Koivistos have been a very beloved and admired presidential couple. The ...graphy developed an even more emotional aura when Mauno Koivisto ...in May, and the whole of Finland stopped to follow the funeral ceremo-...Mattson's biography of Tellervo Koivisto is an interesting biography based ...on interviews and vast documentary material, including correspondence ...een the spouses that has never been published before. The text also aims ...scovering the life of quite an independent woman, one who never wanted ...a public figure but succeeded in making the role her own at a time when ...and was changing politically. This biography opens with the history of ...ics and presents a powerful elite from a gendered perspective. It also re-...s the strong feminist side of Koivisto, particularly during the 1960s and ...s when she was involved in feminist organizations and wrote feminist ...mns as the wife of a Prime Minister.

Other historical biographies on women deal mainly with women writers ...artists as well as theater directors and actors. Regarding the cultural his-...of Finland, many life stories of women authors are untold and in need ...iographical accounts and stories. Both literary scholar Silja Vuorikuru's ...graphy on Aino Kallas (1878–1956), published in April 2017, and art his-...n Hanna-Reetta Schreck's biography of the artist Ellen Thesleff (1869–...), published in September 2017, have had enthusiastic responses from ...ers and critics. Kallas is a much-studied Finnish-Estonian writer of whom ...e has not previously been a proper biography although more literary stud-...and various collections of diaries and letters have been produced over sev-...decades. Vuorikuru's work puts her life into one volume and adds new ...pectives to previous interpretations of Kallas's connections to European

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modernism. Vuorikuru puts special emphasis on Kallas's role in Estonian literary history. Meanwhile, Schreck's text places Ellen Thesleff firmly in the canon of Finnish art history. Thesleff's extraordinary talents and her connections to most topical art discussions and new movements are vividly described and analyzed against the large cultural and historical background of the late 1800s as well as the first decades of the 1900s. In Schreck's analysis, Thesleff was a true feminist icon.

Several other notable biographies on historical women have appeared recently. Kati Launis's biography features the literary Hiisku sisters, who lived in Turku. Jaana Torninoja-Latola's biography features poet Elvi Sinervo, a leftist woman writer who worked actively in the Finnish communist movement of the 1930s and 1940s. Tiina Mahlamäki has produced a new biographical interpretation of Kersti Bergroth, a very visible cultural figure of the early 1900s, who wrote girls' literature, travel literature, many beloved plays and novels, and worked as a journalist and translator. Bergroth has largely been forgotten, so her important role in the cultural history of Finland as well as in the history of the anthroposophy movement in Finland will now be narrated to a new audience. Given these examples, one can say that women are by no means in the shadows, neither as authors nor as subjects of biographies.

LIFE WRITING IN FICTION

Life writing expands to various fields of writing and artistic outputs. One very important and interesting genre is the field of biofiction. As it provokes discussion on the ever-fascinating topics of truth, authenticity, and representations of people of the past, biofiction can help us see more documentary biographical writing from different perspectives. In recent years, various forms of biofiction have been celebrated in Finland. Last year, the Finlandia prize for fiction was awarded to Jukka Viikilä's novel, an imaginary "night-diary" of the German architect Carl Ludvig Engel, who designed the center of the new capital of Finland, Helsinki, during the 1820s and 1830s. Viikilä writes Engel's life in fragmentary diary prose. Another popular work of biofiction in Finland is Riitta Jalonen's novel, *Kirkkaus*, which was a small-scale literary sensation during autumn 2016 and depicts the life story of New Zealander writer Janet Frame. The text, praised on blogs and in newspapers, succeeds in getting under the skin of Frame and her eventful life. Frame, an acclaimed author known particularly from her autobiographical texts written from the 1960s onward, became more internationally known through Jane Campion's film in 1990, *An Angel at My Table*. Campion told the story of a red-haired writer who spent her childhood in very poor circumstances in a small, faraway

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d on the south coast of New Zealand. Frame's emotional sensitivity and mmense capability to express herself with words and imaginative stories ape her destiny. Although she got locked in a mental asylum for a total of years on suspicion that she was schizophrenic, her literary talents were vered by a few close friends and mentors, and she was eventually recog- d as mentally sound.

Jalonen's novel is a study on writing, words, and literary identities, and e afterword and in interviews she acknowledges how this writing process bout her nearly as much as about Janet Frame. She felt she found her lit- r soulmate in Frame, a writer from another part of the world. In the after- d, Jalonen describes how she became interested in Frame and also reflects e differences between biography and a novel: "Elämäkerran ja romaanin n suuri. Elämäkerran maasto ja maisema koostuu dokumentoiduista fak- a ja todennettavasta ajankulusta. Sen sijaan toisen ihmisen elämästä ker- romaani on fiktiota, vapaata valintaa, subjektiivista omaksumista ja aset- umista päähenkilön asemaan" [The difference between biography and the d is huge. The terrain and scenery of a biography consists of documented and actual timespans that can be verified. However, a novel that tells the story of the other is about fiction, free choice, subjectivity, and putting self into another's position] (351).

LIFE ON STAGE

he past year, it has been interesting to follow whose lives have been de- ed in Finnish theater. It seems that much more diverse lives come to the front on stage than in literature, particularly many historical women. Si- aneously, the life stories of women artists have been made into plays.

In autumn 2016, the Finnish national theater Kansallisteatteri premiered lay written by Seppo Parkkinen and directed by Kaisa Korhonen that de- ed the life of the first woman author who wrote in Finnish, Minna Canth. wright Minna Canth (1844–1997) is one of the "great women" in Finn- history and is known for her feminism and her concern for social prob- s and the plight of the lower classes. The biographical play on Canth is an eresting case also concerning biography, since Parkkinen did not want to e a biographical play, although he has been involved in many theater pro- ctions concerning historical lives. Parkkinen wanted the play to be about history of Finnish theater, since Canth was so deeply attached to that his- y. He would have liked to have called it "Theater," but of course the aim of national theater was to promote also the historical figure of Canth. The y itself became a multivoiced drama, a play in which various historical

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figures come alive and discuss various important issues of their times, including art, theater, the place of women in society, and the importance of creativity. It is a wonderful and courageous play, but in the reception it was obvious that its biographical weight was almost too much. It is difficult to detach oneself from the generic constraints, including an insistence on chronology, that is oftentimes expected of biography.

Two plays on Edith Södergran, one of the most important modernist poets in Finland, have also contributed to the importance of Finnish biographical plays. In November 2016, a play by Virpi Haatainen premiered, depicting Södergran and her life with women, both from the perspective of her mother and her close friend and lover Hagar Olsson. In October 2017, another biographical piece about Edith Södergran was performed, Ooppera Skaala's electronic opera, *Vierge Moderne*. This play consists of new electronic music material based on Södergran's poetry, and it was performed by opera singer Essi Luttinen and dancer Minttu Pietilä. This visually and musically powerful production showed how it is possible to obtain fresh new perspectives on historical lives in deconstructing conservative elements of what a historical biography is and how a life story should be told.

Svenska Teatern in Helsinki celebrated its one hundred fiftieth year by depicting the life of Tove Jansson, Finnish-Swedish writer and painter, who is globally known as the creator of Moomin characters. As is the case with Edith Södergran, Jansson's life story is also important for sexual minorities since she was one the first public figures to live openly with women. It is also worth noting that one of the biggest movie productions from 2016 was the movie about Tom of Finland, Finnish artist and composer Touko Laaksonen, whose gay art became globally known when he moved to the United States and became a gay icon.

Returning to the questions proposed at the beginning of this article, it might be possible that the imbalance of gender in historical accounts and products might be a bigger problem in smaller countries as there are, of course, fewer biographies even published and a small market for biographies. In the case of Finland, the "burden" of national history is heavy and has been evident in 2017, when the celebration of independence has been viewed from the perspective of the war years of the 1940s (the Winter War of 1939–1940 and the so called Continuation War of 1941–1944). The aim of constructing (male) national heroes and various canonical figures in our history is still important both in academic and more popular writing, and it seems that women form a crucial yet still underappreciated component of our common history and cultural memory.

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NOUVELLE BIOGRAPHIE, PULP NONFICTION, AND NATIONAL CRISIS

THE YEAR IN FRANCE

JOANNY MOULIN

By a stroke of fate, the summer of 2017 has seen the demise of two famous French biographers, Max Gallo (1931–2017) and Gonzague Saint Bris (1948–2017). Although they came from radically different social backgrounds, they both stood for a certain idea of biography as a popular literary genre characterized by conservative tendencies and a kitsch style of pop history.

Max Gallo was the son of working-class Italian immigrants who had found in Nice, in southeast France, a shelter against Mussolini's fascism before his father took an active part in the French resistance. Having left school at the age of eleven to earn a living as a factory worker, then as a radio technician, Max went on educating himself as an autodidact. At the time of the Algerian War, in 1956, he was already leaving the Communist Party, and the next year he passed the *agrégation* to become a professor of history at Lycée Masséna. Then in 1968 he defended a PhD dissertation on Italian fascist propaganda that opened for him the door to a brief academic career as assistant lecturer at the University of Nice. Dabbling in politics and journalism, he became a socialist member of Parliament in 1981, the year when the socialist Union de la Gauche won the presidential election with François Mitterrand: Gallo acquired national notoriety as an official government spokesman. In 1992, he left the Socialist Party to found a center-left divergent current with Jean-Pierre Chevènement, whom he still supported in the 2002 election that saw the defeat of the Socialist Party and the extreme-right leader of the Front National reach the second round of the presidential election, a shocking first since World War II. In 2005, Gallo campaigned for the "No" in the referendum on the European Constitution that brought the build-up of political Europe to a halt. In 2007 he had completed his ideological metamorphosis,

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spoke publicly in favor of the right-wing candidate Nicolas Sarkozy, ad- with naïve sincerity to the apology for the necessity of the debate on estion of *identité nationale*. In 2008, Gallo was elected to the Académie aise.

This thumbnail life sketch is helpful in understanding the ideological ing of Gallo's literary commitment, based on the conviction Gallo cap- d in his *La Croix* article titled, "La France est dans une crise nationale de e durée" [France is in an extended period of national crisis]. In an inter- to the news magazine *Le Point*, which claims to be a French equivalent magazine, he declared that, contrary to the US, France is a country the people are not united by an "attachement religieux" (Gallo, "Il suf- going as far as to say that the French Revolution was "un antimodèle ese encore aujourd'hui" [an antimodel that still weighs on us today], a ly, unfortunate birth of the Nation that Gallo saw as forever exposing "l'irruption de la violence et des barbaries" [an eruption of violence and arism]. In a 2002 interview, given to the Catholic news magazine *La Vie*, h republished this text in July 2017 on the occasion of his death, Gallo ared, "La France a besoin de retrouver ses racines chrétiennes" [France s to rediscover its Christian roots] ("Pourquoi je prie"). He went on to in that such had been the meaning of his literary work over the years: yer de donner une image la plus complète possible de la diversité de notre ire nationale" [to attempt to give the most complete image possible of iversity of our national history]. His multivolume historical novels—*Les iens* following *Bleu Blanc Rouge* and *Les patriotes*, soon to be followed *Morts pour la France*—read like prosopographies, or group biographies, of most obvious great figures of French history. It is a return to a form of lar historiography, implicitly assuming, like Ralph Waldo Emerson, that e is properly no history; only biography" (15), turning the page on a few des of structuralism and the Annales School. There is hardly any differ- between Gallo's fictions, his histories, and his biographies, all address- the kind of subjects journalists call *marronniers* (chestnuts)—*Napoléon*, *Gaulle*, *Victor Hugo*, *Louis XIV*, *Henri IV*, etc.—the last ones he churned being *Henri IV: Un roi français* (2016) and *Richelieu: La foi dans la France* 7). Gallo's writing career was a long succession of books celebrating great symptomatic of a backward-looking mindset that was a sort of Catholic valent of Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes and Hero Worship* (1841). In a mod- historical context in which it is a crucial issue in France, as indeed in other ntries of the European community, when and whether the Old World will come at last its ancestral division between national identities that, in the s of many, bear the guilt of past barbarism and present impotence, Gallo's doubt well-meaning effort was more simpleminded than well advised.

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Among the common points between Gallo and Gonzague Saint Bris is the mercenary motivation of their writing: both obviously wrote for money, in the modern heritage of a tradition of commercial paraliterature, a form of what Sainte-Beuve used to call *la littérature industrielle* and that we might call pulp nonfiction, which is strongly reminiscent of the *anas*, collections of purple patches, anecdotes, and biographical sketches thriving on the fame of historical figures and celebrities. The generic name comes from the Latin suffix *-ana*: a popular genre since the late eighteenth century, in which some now-forgotten writers used to specialize, like Charles-Yves Cousin d'Avallon (1769–1840), the prolific author of *Voltaireana*, *Bonapartiana*, and so many specimens in the same cultural species. Whereas the nobiliary particle "de" in Cousin d'Avallon's name was a sham (he was a very plebeian Monsieur Cousin from Avallon), Gonzague Saint Bris was the cadet son of a family of the papal nobility. Much as d'Avallon once used his fake particle as a commercial brand, Saint Bris exploited his upper-class origin as a *fonds de commerce*, posing as an expert and an admirer of the *noblesse*, producing in book form an equivalent of *Point de vue, Images du monde: Le journal des princes d'aujourd'hui*, a French popular magazine specializing in *Almanach de Gotha* members. His last book, published posthumously after his sudden death in a car crash in August 2017, sounds like a testament: *Aristocrates rebelles*. "Ils sont nés avec un nom et des privilèges. Ils ont choisi leur propre destin; la liberté" [They were born with a name and with privileges. They chose their own destiny: liberty], says the front-page blurb. This book is a collection of biographical sketches, twenty-three in some three hundred pages, presenting a selection of aristocrats' lives, from Germaine de Staël to Antoine de Saint Exupéry, from Alphonse de Lamartine to Simone de Beauvoir. Not that Saint Bris made the aristocracy an exclusive specialty: he could rise to the occasion as when, on the death of Michael Jackson, he published *Au paradis avec Michael Jackson* based on his own encounter and conversations with the pop star, with whom he had spent some time during his 1992 journey in Gabon. Saint Bris was also the tutelary spirit of *La Forêt des livres*, an annual literary event he had founded in 1995, where writers and other celebrities signed their books and received awards in the country setting of Chanceaux-près-Loire.

Max Gallo revising once more the Carlylean cult of Great Men to perpetuate the sense of belonging to a national community, Gonzague Saint Bris revisiting the tradition of the *anas* in the spirit of popular magazines: looking back on the careers of these two French biographers as their obituaries hit the news, one is bound to think Catherine Peters was right when she said, "the biographer-as-artist is still living in the nineteenth century. It is hard to imagine a *nouvelle biographie*, analogous to the *nouveau roman*, in which anonymous characters

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…d through a neutral landscape, living out narrative-free existences" (44). …ever, such an opinion is not devoid of a mild touch of what C. S. Lewis …d "chronological snobbery, the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual …ise common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone …of date is on that account discredited" (207–08). For, in retrospect, the …*eau roman* appears as the very ephemeral curiosity. There is no reason …the novel should be the compulsory paradigm of all writing, and to all …oses and purposes contemporary fiction is characterized by a return to …narrative and the individual life story. Moreover, "new biography" had …ded the *nouveau roman* in the history of literature: this early twentieth-…ury school of biography, of which Lytton Strachey and André Maurois …the paragons in Britain and in France respectively, was characterized by …horter, fiction-like form of "narrative history" and the predominance of …biographer's point of view. In very different ways, there is much of new …graphy in Gonzague Saint Bris, the histrionic maverick of noblesse oblige, …in Max Gallo, the Quixotic white knight of national history. The im-…ance of the narrative and the widespread though nonexclusive interest in …wentieth-century subjects may also be symptomatic of a present when …ch culture is striving to overcome its poststructuralist period in the acad-…while in literature it has definitely turned its back on the blind alley of …*ouveau roman*.

Remarkably, the Prix Goncourt de la Biographie, after having rewarded …ppe Forest for *Aragon* in 2016, was awarded in 2017 to Marianne and …de Schopp for their brainchild, *Dumas fils ou l'Anti-Œdipe*. It is the first-…biography of Alexandre Dumas *fils*, the author of *La Dame aux Camélias*, …was even more famous than his father in his own lifetime, although pos-…y has elected Alexandre Dumas *père*, the prolific author of *Les Trois Mous-…quetaires* among many other historical novels and biographies. Rather than in …o's *marronniers*, we seem to be more interested in forgotten or rebel fig-…. For instance, Paul Gauguin, the post-impressionist painter, fascinates us …cisely because he scandalously rejected stuffy metropolitan values of nine-…h-century France. David Haziot's *Gauguin* is one of several biographies …the painter that came out in fall 2017, while the biopic of his years in exile …Edouard Deluc, *Paul Gauguin, Voyage à Tahiti*, where the painter is played …Vincent Cassel, came out in September 2017. A new edition of *Noa Noa*, …guin's autobiographical narrative of his first journey in Tahiti, is published …a pocketbook collection with a preface by Victor Segalen (1878–1919), the …entric Breton doctor, novelist, poet, ethnographer, sinologist, and arche-…gist. It is easy to miss the connection with Jean-Luc Coatalem's *Mes Pas …ailleurs*: half-novel, half-biography, where Coatelem addresses Segalen,

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his wandering life, and his multifaceted works in a digressive text, constantly transgressing chronology and demonstrating the modernist potentialities of biographical writing in a style reminiscent of A. J. A. Symons's in *The Quest for Corvo* (1934) and of American biographer David E. Nye's anti-biography of Thomas Edison, *The Invented Self* (1983). On blogs, modern readers complain that the writing is confusing and boring to read. No doubt that is a sign of the times.

The year 2017 saw a momentous election in France, and there is a clear public feeling that this presidential campaign and its outcome has turned an important page in our *roman national*, insofar as it has greatly changed the political landscape. Biographical writing in the largest sense of the term has played an important part in this transformation. Gérard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme's *"Un président ne devrait pas dire ça . . ."* can be viewed as a form of instant life writing, in which President Hollande authorized two journalists to publish his confidences. The book was judged so scandalously incompatible with the dignity and secrecy demanded of the office of the president that it has played an important part in Hollande's decision not to run for a second term. Some observers went as far as to say that it may have been a form of political suicide. In fall 2016, Gallimard had published two posthumous texts by Hollande's role model, François Mitterrand (1916–1996): *Journal pour Anne* and *Lettres à Anne*, containing details about the President's half-secret double life with Anne Pingeot, but these were posthumous works. Scarcely had the campaign been launched when, in January 2017, the satirical paper *Le Canard enchaîné* made revelations about the past life of Hollande's runner up, the Republican François Fillon, that were tantamount to political assassination. On the seasonal market created by the electoral campaign, every candidate was the object of more or less authorized biographical attempts. Standing out from the usual run of the mill, one could notice in particular Francis Métivier's *Mythologie des Présidentiables*, a collection of five very short e-books—which can certainly not be suspected of mercenary intentions, as the batch cost only five euros—that purported brief sketches of the mythical images that the candidates projected of themselves. Much more substantial, albeit not more expensive in terms of cost per page, Renaud Dely's *La Vraie Marine Le Pen: Une bobo chez les fachos* undertook a systematic deconstruction of the public image of the woman leader of the extreme-right National Front, who had never been so close to a potential win. One way or another, never more clearly than this year has biography and autobiography been put to use in the run for the presidency. Some biographies of Emmanuel Macron, like Anne Fulda's, or Caroline Derrien and Candice Nedelec's portrait of the future presidential couple, *Les Macron*, amounted to apologies under a thin

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of critical distance. More remarkably still, Macron himself produced autobiographical books: *Macron par Macron* in late 2016 and *Révolution* ly 2017 that did much to help sell his character to the electorate. With Max Gallo and Gonzague Saint Bris an outmoded style of biogra- is dying away in this country, while the genre discreetly plays a central in the cultural life of the nation. Away from the conventional old ches- Dominique Bona, the most recently elected woman member of the Aca- française (2013) has produced a remarkable text, *Colette et les siennes*, as of her vindication of the cause of women, while the historian Georgette has published her autobiography, *Toutes fenêtres ouvertes*. This self-nar- of a French intellectual resonates with the renewed interest of the acade- *ego-histoire*—a concept derived by Pierre Nora in 1987 from the notion ego-document" coined by Dutch historian Jacques Presser in the mid- —and more particularly the *égo-histoires* of modern historians, which the objects of research of the Réseau Historiographie et Épistémologie de toire funded by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche. On the whole, ems at times that nearly every new book has some biographical or auto- graphical dimension, while in French cinema *le biopic* flourishes: among ny other examples, Michel Hazanavius's latest film, *Le Redoutable*, a par- biopic of Jean-Luc Godard's married life with Anne Wiazemsky, is any- g but a hagiography of "le plus con des Suisses pro-Chinois" [the daftest Chinese Swiss], as a graffiti on a wall of the Sorbonne labeled the Mao- lm-maker in 1968. This brief chronicle cannot hope to do justice to the th of biographical productions in France this year, but it seems clear that graphy in the larger sense has become a center-stage genre in French cul- l and intellectual life. Its innovative potential is still inchoate, but the s are that it will not take the forms of what the last century called modern.

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WRITERS ON WRITING
THE YEAR IN ICELAND

GUNNTHORUNN GUDMUNDSDOTTIR

Last year's crop of auto/biographical writing in Iceland was perhaps slightly smaller than the year before,[1] but on closer inspection autobiographical works, or perhaps more accurately life writing, popped up in some unexpected places. In a journey through published works in the past year, a pattern was discernable. In short, it seemed that authors have been concerned with writing about writing, whether it was an author's and artist's auto/bio/fictional conversation with his muse in Sigurður Guðmundsson's *Musa: Kvöld*; a writer's autobiographical look back on the origins of his own writing in Pétur Gunnarsson's *Skriftir: Örlagagletta*; metafictional reflections on the writing life as in *Ég er sofandi hurð* by Sjón (Sigurjón B. Sigurðsson); in the biofiction *Bjargræði*, in which novelist Hermann Stefánsson brings an eighteenth-century poet, known as Björg Einarsdóttir or Látra-Björg, to a café in contemporary Reykjavík for a chat with a local; or contemplation of a literary upbringing in the memoirs of the daughter of the Icelandic Nobel laureate Halldór Laxness, Sigríður Halldórsdóttir's *Elsku Drauma mín: Minningabók Sigríðar Halldórsdóttur* written in collaboration with Vigdís Grímsdóttir. The overarching theme is a well-known literary trope—writers on writing—but executed in a variety of ways, ranging from a fairly traditional memoir form to highly innovative experimental narratives. But why the concern with writing? Why the search for origin and motivation and the first spark of creativity and literary thought? Why was writing in the air?

There is nothing ordinary or familiar in the work of the internationally acclaimed visual artist Sigurður Guðmundsson, in which the central theme and subject matter is creativity, art, and writing. He explains in his book, *Musa*, that he is in the middle of a serious artistic crisis. The artist feels he has run out of ideas and believes he has nothing more to contribute. These crises affect him badly, upset his life, and shatter his self-image. Guðmundsson, who has previously published three auto/bio/fictional works, explains that all

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s suffer through crises of some sort or another and that his way out of troubles in the past has been to go away and write a book:

Það að skrifa bók eða skáldsögu er fyrir mig einhverskonar björgunarbátur eða trikk til að leika á krísuna, sem kolruglast við þetta bragð mitt. En gáfur mínar sýna mér fram á að björgunarbáturinn Bók er aðeins nothæfur fyrir mig vegna þess að ég er ekki rithöfundur. Rök: Það væri lélegur sjómaður sem mundi gera út á björgunarbát. (Guðmundsson 11)

[Writing a book or a novel is for me a kind of lifeboat or a way to trick the crisis, as this ruse of mine utterly confuses it. But my intelligence makes it very clear to me that the lifeboat Book is only available to me because I am not a writer. Reasoning: It would be a poor seaman who made a lifeboat his vessel.]

o and behold, this time around, once he is all set to start on his new k, nothing happens: he is gripped by writer's block, *ritstífla*, a word he, has lived abroad for large stretches of his adult life, didn't even know exin Icelandic. The "lifeboat Book" that was supposed to save him from artistic crisis sank before he could even get on board: "Sjálfsmynd mín rnaði" [My self-image collapsed] (15). In the ensuing chapters, in an effort eal himself, to bring back his artistic life and identity, he reprints older s, has long conversations with a character he describes as his very own ne *musa* (muse). She is not, however, one of the Greek goddesses: "hún miklu raunverulegri en goðsagnirnar og hún er miklu persónulegri fyrir um en nokkur goðsögn getur verið" [she is much more real than the legs and a lot more personal for him than any legend can be] (49). In their versations they explore creativity and gender, creativity and inspiration, tivity and myth, all in a highly playful but insightful manner. Make no take, Guðmundsson finds himself at times full of fury and impatience at situations he finds himself in. He is irritated at his advancing age or at life general, but the end result is a book after all, an intact lifeboat that might serve as a raft for others in the middle of their own particular crises.

Pétur Gunnarsson is a well-established novelist, essayist, and biographer has now published a memoir, so far in two volumes, *Veraldarsaga mín: saga hugmynda* (2014) and *Skriftir: Örlagagletta* (2016), in which he es on his childhood, youth, and his life as a writer. The first part of *Skriftir* voted to books he read and writers he admired in his youth, and his first mpts at writing. He explains, "Rithöfundur *in spe* þróar snemma með sér ðu til lífsins sem er ögn frábrugðin því sem tíðkast. Á meðan aðrir lifa lífinu rithöfundurinn svo að segja *á* lífinu, lífið er fyrst og fremst yrkisefni" [A *in spe* soon develops an attitude to life slightly different from the norm. le others live life, the writer lives, so to speak, *on* life, life is first and fore- a subject matter] (Gunnarsson, *Skriftir* 53).

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What is at first glance a fairly traditional writer's memoir differs from the familiar tale of the origins of a writer's calling in subtle ways. Gunnarsson does indeed tell us of his first published poems in the school paper, and then more excitingly in the Sunday paper, but he does not go so far as to develop a creation myth, a turning point or an epiphany that he looks back on as the moment that turned him into a writer.[2] Instead he interweaves tales of his first forays into the literary world with reminiscences of how he met his wife, their years in France, the birth of his first child, and his origins, including his family and their background. Everyday life is foregrounded instead of what is unusual and singular in the life of the writer. In a sense, the memoir covers familiar ground but with a light touch; fragments of a life are pulled together without turning into an overarching narrative. Gunnarsson quotes Aristotle in *Poetics*:

> Saga þarf ekki að vera heild, eins og margir álíta, þótt hún sé um einhvern einstakan mann, því mörg og óteljandi atvik geta hent einn mann, án þess að sum þeirra falli í nokkra heild. Þannig eru og athafnir eins manns margar, en engin samfelld atburðakeðja verður úr þeim öllum. (Gunnarsson 159)
>
> [Unity of plot does not, as some persons think, consist in the unity of the hero. For infinitely various are the incidents in one man's life, which cannot be reduced to unity; and so, too, there are many actions of one man out of which we cannot make one action.][3]

Gunnarsson's emphasis on the everyday and the family is a well-known theme from his fiction, in which he has explored in different ways how families work (or don't work), and how and where life and art meet. He muses on the structure of a life narrative and says:

> Ef lífið væri harmleikur bryti hann gróflega í bága við forskrift Aristótelesar um framvindu innan eins sólarhrings. Ef það væri skólastíll flaskaði það eftirminnilega á upphafi, miðbiki og niðurlagi. Og ef það væri skáldsaga fengi höfundurinn handritið vísast aftur í hausinn. En í endursýn fær allt annan róm, minnið úrvelur augnablik sem standast allar listrænar köfur. Undarlega fá. (Gunnarsson 74)
>
> [If life were a tragedy it would break clearly with Aristotle's formula of a plot being limited to twenty-four hours. If it were a school essay, it would fail spectacularly to include an introduction, a middle, and a conclusion. And, if it were a novel, the author would surely have the manuscript returned to him. But in recollection everything has another tone; memory chooses moments that live up to all artistic demands. Surprisingly few.]

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e prompts this statement is an image Gunnarsson has retained in his ory of when he returned home by boat after a long absence and saw his end and mother waiting on the dock: "Það var árla morguns, skipið inn á lognkyrra höfnina, borg drauma minna var nýfarin að rumska rna standa þær á kajanum, Hrafnhildur og mamma" [It was early morn- the ship sailed into the calm harbor, the city of my dreams stirring from p and there they stand on the dock, Hrafnhildur and Mom] (74–75). hat can you do with such a pristine memory in writing? Will it work? he continues:

Sú saga er sögð af Kristjáni Guðmundssyni myndlistarmanni að hann hafi eitt sinn borið undir bróður sinn, Sigurð, verk sem hann hafði nýlokið við. Það samanstóð af tveimur samsíða línum. Sigurður kinkaði kolli, en Kristján spurði efins: "Finnst þér þetta ekkert væmið?" Það sama hvarflar auðvitað að mér. En ég get ómögulega hætt að bjaga þessa mynd, hvað þá sverta hana. Hún bara er. (75)

The story is told of Kristján Guðmundsson the artist who once asked his brother, Sigurður [the author of *Musa*], for an opinion on a work he had just completed. It was made up of two straight parallel lines. Sigurður nodded his approval, but Kristján asked doubtfully: "Don't you find it a bit sentimental?" The same of course occurs to me. But I can't possibly distort this image, let alone blacken it. It just is.]

of his concerns is how writing on the past can capture the tone and emo- retained in such memories, especially when aesthetic criteria might be at with the memory, that is, how art and life are negotiated in such mo- s in the text.

THE WRITER IN HIS WORK

016, the long-awaited final volume of Sjón's trilogy *Codex 1962*, which n with the novel *Augu þín sáu mig: Ástarsaga* in 1994, was published un- the title of *Ég er sofandi hurð*.[4] The trilogy tackles themes such as war, mi- on, folk stories and myths, creativity, and genetics—none of which lends well to a short summary. As is his custom, Sjón writes each part of the gy in a new genre or alludes to different genres in the subtitles: the first is a "love story," the second "crime fiction," and the third "science fiction." dless to say, none of the works adheres exactly to these popular fiction es, but reflect and refer to them in a variety of ways. In the last volume, as in many other works of his, makes the presence of the author felt in guing forms throughout the novel. For example, one of the characters s out to have been born on the very same day as Sjón. Throughout the the text is interspersed with lists of birth and death dates, with all the

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births being in that same year, 1962. One of the main characters is a geneticist, with thwarted writing ambitions, who bears an uncanny resemblance to a prominent and controversial Icelandic geneticist, and thus the work enters the realm of biofiction.

Sjón's use of metafictional elements and the figure of the author in his works is far from simplistic or arbitrary. As Úlfhildur Dagsdóttir notes when discussing the second volume of the trilogy in her recent book on Sjón's oeuvre, Sjón uses metafictional elements that reflect on creation myths of many types, most prominently the myth of the golem. The authorial presence becomes most noticable when Sjón reveals at the end of the second volume that the narrator is the author himself. Dagsdóttir explains that even though it would be tempting to read this admission as an autobiographical dimension of the work, it is much more of a commentary on the figure of the author in general, rather than an insight into the author's own life (Dagsdóttir 266). And Sjón comments on the writer's calling in the third volume as well. The famous geneticist admits when drunk that he had always planned to become a poet (472). He published a poem in the school paper, but when his older brother read it and said it was a third-class imitation of a famous poet, the dream was over. He decided to become a doctor: "Ekkert íslenskt skáld hafði fyrr gert að efniviði sínum Manninn sjálfan og bókstaflega ort úr holdi og blóði. Þar var engin hætta á að mér yrði líkt við nokkurn annan, aðrir yrðu þriðja klassa stæling á mér. Íslendingar skyldu sjá að það væri hægt að fá Nóbelsverðlaun í fleiru en bókmenntum" [No Icelandic poet has had Man himself as his subject matter and literally composed with flesh and blood. In this there was no danger I would be compared to anyone else, others would be a third-class imitation of me. Icelanders would realize that it was possible to get the Nobel Prize for other things than literature] (478). Later on when he has become the head of a firm that has access to the whole Icelandic DNA pool, he can be proud of not only being the author of his own life, but also the author of the nation's life (530).

THE WRITER IN ANOTHER'S WORK

Writers' legacies manifest themselves in different ways through the writings of others, whether we call these legacies influences, references, or intertextuality. At times the writers themselves turn up. One such example is in the work of the novelist and critic Hermann Stefánsson, who has written biofiction on the eighteenth-century poet Björg Einarsdóttir. According to legend, Björg was a *kraftaskáld* (a magic poet or power poet). She was capable of influencing people and events with her verse, a well-known trope from the Icelandic sagas

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ord. As Björg explains herself, "Skáldskapur er galdur, það vissu menn
á átjándu öld, stöku sál veit það í dag, þú veist ekki mart en þú vissir þó
a það var ást" [Poetry is magic, this people knew in the eighteenth cen-
few souls know this today, you don't know a lot but this you did know,
s love] (Stefánsson 37).

The eighteenth-century power-poet appears in a café in contemporary
ejavík to chat with a man called Tómas, to whom she tells her remark-
story while simultaneously addressing his story, and so the narrative is in
second person. She explains to him, "tíminn er ímyndun, þú og ég erum
ða, allt er sögunnar og ævintýrisins" [time is imagined, you and I are of
time, everything belongs to the story and to the adventure] (16). She is
particularly impressed with contemporary life, has a lot to say about her
times, and has no patience with how scholars have treated her and her
in the past. All this she conveys in a fiery and flavorful language, the au-
making use of eighteenth-century vocabulary and stylistic peculiarities.
text is further interspersed with Einarsdóttir's own poems as well as new
by the author. It is impossible to do justice to all the historical and liter-
references and dimensions, but suffice it to say that this book is an inven-
and successful way of bringing a writer from the past to life in fiction.

LIVES OF WRITERS

figure of Halldór Laxness looms large in *Elsku Drauma mín*, as it does
Icelandic literature in general. Gunnarsson explains in *Skriftir* that the
in Reykjavík "was thick with" Halldór Laxness (Gunnarsson 45). And
Laxness's daughter, the journalist and translator Sigríður Halldórsdóttir,
ks of growing up with him and of bringing up her own family. The writer
ís Grímsdóttir, a highly respected novelist in Iceland, has tried her hand
ie writing before, in biography and memoir, and here she lets Halldórs-
r tell her own story in her own words with the very occasional question
wn in that interrogates a memory, an opinion, or a feeling, addressing the
ator with the familiar form of her name, Sigga.

Halldórsdóttir tells stories of her childhood and of what it was like living
the famous man. She includes photographs, as well as letters and notes
ween herself and her parents, and is throughout extremely aware and un-
standing of human foibles—both others' and her own. She speaks of her
children and marriages and, after recounting a childhood memory, she
ains:

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> í bók eins og minni rúmast ekki allt, lífið rúmast aldrei í bók, ekki nema örlítið brotabrot af því, enda stóð aldrei til að reyna slíkt. En stundum er ég þrátt fyrir allt að hugsa um að skrifa aðra bók um allt það sem ekki er sagt í þessari.—Hvers vegna, Sigga?—Vegna þess að hver minning vísar í aðra, hver saga á nýja sögu, hver hugmynd á nýja. Það er svo merkilegt. Sú bók gæti vel heitið *ekki bókin*, eða *hvers vegna ekki bókin*, eða *slepptu kaflarnir*. Kannski geri ég eins og svo margir höfundar á undan mér sem virðast ekki geta hætt að skrifa um eigið líf. Kannski er það ekki galin stefna hjá mér. (Grímsdóttir and Halldórsdóttir 191–92)
>
> [in a book like mine there isn't room for everything, life doesn't fit into a book, except fractions of it, and I never intended to try anything like that. But sometimes, despite it all, I think of writing another book on everything that is not said in this one.—Why Sigga?—Because each memory refers to another one, each story has a new story, each idea a new one. It is so remarkable. That book could be called the *not book* or the *why not book*, or the *missing chapters*. Maybe I will do as so many authors have done before me who cannot stop writing about their own lives. Perhaps that isn't such a silly aim.]

Writing and lives in writing were clearly in the air in Icelandic literature in 2016, although perhaps one should be wary of trying to construct an overarching narrative out of such very different works. But it is undeniable that they offer different insights and commentary, reworkings of writing, writings, the writing process—in some ways in the tradition of the literary auto/biography and in other ways in radical reimaginings of what writing and the writing life mean. Perhaps the advent of new media and the decline of reading and bookselling has had this effect, but it does not seem to be at the forefront of these forays into writing on writing. Rather it seems to echo long-held fascinations with the artistic process and the meaning of a writer's life.

NOTES

1. See my "Truths and Testimonies: The Year in Iceland."
2. The first volume, *Veraldarsaga mín*, could be said to contain such turning points, specifically at the end of the book when he describes reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez: "It was like being sucked into a light hole. From the mists of imagination into the light of the narrative" (Gunnarsson, *Veraldarsaga* 158–59).
3. This is Butcher's translation.
4. Sjón's works have been translated into many languages, and many of his novels are available in English. *Codex 1962* will be published in the UK and the US in 2018.

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BIOPICS
THE YEAR IN INDIA

PRAMOD K. NAYAR

The biographical movie has seen a resurgence in India in recent years. Biopics have revolved around sports stars such as the athlete Milkha Singh in *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013), cricketers M. S. Dhoni in *M. S. Dhoni: The Untold Story* (2016), Mohammad Azharuddin in *Azhar* (2016), and Sachin Tendulkar in *Sachin: A Billion Dreams* (2016). Films have also been built around other real-life people whose actions in extraordinary, often inimical and daunting conditions become the subject of the biopic: Neerja Bhanot, the flight attendant who died in the 1986 Pan Am hijacking, is portrayed in *Neerja* (2016); Manjhi, a man who, over twenty-two years, carved a route through a hillock armed with just a hammer and a chisel, is portrayed in *Manjhi: The Mountain Man* (2015); and Charles Shobraj, the conman and killer, is portrayed in *Main Aur Charles* (2015).

The nation figures prominently in the biopics, especially the ones around sporting stars. The family is an equally important theme. They propose, implicitly, a cultural citizenship founded on aspirational models and attitudes. They also embody a complicated, layered aesthetic that conjoins artifice and artifact.

THE NOTABLE SUBJECT

Admittedly, the hagiographic biopic bestows a certain immortality upon the "character" of the story. In addition, this immortality is also bestowed through the concentrated attention audiences bring to bear upon the figure. Murray Pomerance writes,

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participate to some degree in the experiences and events by virtue of which some other person has apparently become notable. We explore the notability that triggers in the story as a kind of shadow trace that follows the subject. The biopic subject is at once notable in objective terms, having become what he is; and notable dramaturgically, since the adoration of crowds is an ostensible component of the subject's story as recounted on the screen. (30)

notability of the subject is the effect of a dual discourse in the biopic. the sporting biopics, appropriating the public discourse around figures Tendulkar, highlight their grandest achievements, which are presented as nearly miraculous. "Sachin's magic" was a commonly heard comment connection with his batting, and Dhoni's great powers in finishing off a to India's advantage was also often deemed miraculous in public dis-. When India won despite all odds, mainly due to Tendulkar's batting, described as a "miracle." Second, the biopic shows us what exactly—, behavior, achievement—has made the subject notable: Manjhi toiling with the entire village laughing at him, or Tendulkar practicing in the on a squelching wicket.[1] The biopic moves from the miraculous and the ical to the *marvelous*, where the former is associated with the domain of supernatural and the divine, and the latter with human wonders. If the discourse renders the stars supernatural beings (Tendulkar) or eccentrics anjhi), the second casts them as mortals endowed with extraordinarily am-ed but decidedly human virtues: grit, determination, ambition. The bi-'s rhetoric works at the level of both process and product, oscillating be-en the two, so that the magic of a Tendulkar or a Manjhi is explained as product of a strenuous but very human process. Further, in this shift from miraculous to the marvelous, the biopic offers up an aspirational model the rest of the nation, and reframes the marvelous as a success story that ld serve as such a model.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

picturing" has been seen as driven by the generic plot of "national iden-" (Epstein 8). This is decidedly true in the case of India's sports biopics in ch the lives of its sporting heroes—Tendulkar, Dhoni, Azhar—are very arly cast as national lives, their work (and play) as embodying the nation's ests. The biopics focus on the affect generated when the cricketer on en scores or is out: the nation mourns or celebrates accordingly. *A Bil-Dreams* in the Tendulkar biopic's title is precisely that: he embodies the ams of the entire Indian population of one billion. The biopic constructs sporting figure as a key "national symbolic" (Berlant 155) around whom blic coheres. Berlant defines the functions of the national symbolic thus:

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> the collective possession of its official texts—the flag, Uncle Sam, Mount Rushmore, the Pledge of Allegiance, even now, perhaps, JFK and Dr. Martin Luther King—creates a national "public" that constantly repudiates political knowledge where it exceeds performatively mythic national codes. (155)

The Indian biopic, often hagiographic in tone, makes the sporting hero such an official text—one that generates a sense of affective belonging. Therefore, Azharuddin's involvement in the match-fixing scandal, in real life (2000) as well as in the biopic, introduces disaffection, discontent, and downright repugnance precisely because the act is treated not as an *individual's* tragic flaw or error of judgment but as an act of sedition and national betrayal. This conflation of the individual and the nation makes the biopic a key element in the making (or unmaking) of national identity, because the success or failure of the sporting "hero" is a national symbolic in which the hero embodies the aspirations, virtues, and promise of an entire country. With every six runs Tendulkar scores, with every onslaught Dhoni launches on the opposition bowlers, the crowd—a metonym for the nation—roars in these films. Just as watching a film in a movie theater and participating in the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of the protagonists is a symbol of democracy's constituency (Rajadhyaksha). The people in the stadium, those at home, and those on the streets looking at TV monitors in shop windows when Tendulkar bats all embody the diverse *demos* of India's democracy, brought together, as the biopics highlight, by the talent of one man. "Cricket is our religion, and Sachin is our God" reads the famous banner at matches in which he played, and the biopic dwells upon this national text: the man, the slogan, the game.

In the case of non-sporting biopics, the nation figures in different ways. Manjhi's story becomes a national symbolic of a different kind in the biopic: he embodies resilience. Poor, illiterate, and unskilled in geological and engineering techniques, Manjhi conquers, literally, a mountain. Because he was equipped with the barest of implements, Manjhi's success is presented as the power of his persistence and resilience, before which the mountain yields. At various points when the villagers mock him, when he doubts himself, and when his ailing wife looks askance at his efforts, Manjhi discovers hidden resources within and continues his battle. In a similar fashion, *Neerja* foregrounds the courage of a woman who, when faced with a hijacker (who has already beaten and pistol-whipped her), stares down the barrel of a gun and does not flinch. Ensuring that the passengers are safe, the hijackers mollified, and finally seeing many of the passengers escape when the opportunity arises, the protagonist of this biopic becomes a national hero (she was posthumously bestowed India's highest peacetime bravery award, the Ashok Chakra). If

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...hi is about one man's persistence, *Neerja* is about individual courage. ...e neither of the two real-life characters has made it to the kind of na... ...l stage Tendulkar occupies, these biopics alert us to the unsung, forgot... ...eroes who did not set out to be heroic. The slightly melodramatic biopics ...ore portray ordinary people who do extraordinary things: Manjhi wants ...ate treatment for his wife; Neerja wants a yellow dress. By pointing to ...ssentially unheroic nature of their dreams and aspirations, the biopics of... ...a new version of the national symbolic: the ordinary person's resilience ...ntegrity is as heroic as that of Tendulkar's when he takes on the mighty ...alian-pace bowling attack. They celebrate the ordinary-as-hero because ...rdinary serves as a "national heroic" when the individual performs a task ...chieves something greater than individual glory: the hero embodies met... ...ically the spirit of the nation.

...famy, in the case of *Azhar* and *Main Aur Charles*, also serves as a na... ...l symbolic because these real-life characters come to embody the flaws in ...dividual but also, perhaps, in India's cultural makeup. In a sense, they ...nt lives that disrupt the triumphant narrative of the nation, embodied in ...i, Neerja, Sachin, Manjhi, and highlighted in their corresponding biop... These biopics of disreputable figures rupture the texture of the audience's ...s, claims, and metanarratives about India. Crime, deviance, sociopathol... ...and corruption are also as much a part of India as Tendulkar's heroics, ...ja's courage, and Manjhi's persistence. The current crop of Bollywood bi... ...s, then, counterbalances the dominant narrative of the national symbolic ...hich offers up hard work, courage, determination—with the performance ...viance and corruption. Villainy and heroism both occupy the national ...bolic in biopics. If *Neerja*, *M. S. Dhoni*, and *Sachin* generate a certain cul... ...of victory, *Main Aur Charles* and *Azhar* temper it.

The second key feature of the biopic in India is that the film is based on ...life people, and therefore the audience often *knows* how the lives of the ...agonists shaped up and how they ended beyond the representation on ...en. The biopic, then, is an already circulating life story. Pomerance writes,

> With the biopic subject in mind, the viewer does not have to stretch the imagination, as in standard fiction film, in order to find some bridging that allows for the transfer of the subject's putative experience as his own; the biopic, after all, takes place in the world space of the viewer's own life and experience. Even if removed by glory, power, or fame, the subject is always also a person one *could* have touched. (28, emphasis in original)

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Thus, the experiences of a Tendulkar or an Azhar, or the short-lived one of Neerja Bhanot, is something the audience *shares* through two modes: by pre-existing knowledge of their accomplishments in real life and the dramatic representation of these experiences on the screen. That is, on the one hand, we are part of the real world of these characters and on the other are witnesses to a certain magical compression of that world into a three-hour spectacle on screen. We both participate in and distance ourselves from Tendulkar's successes and Azhar's follies. The national symbolic works on this continuum, from the known/knowable world to the fictional one.

THE FAMILY

If the biopic emphasizes, in most cases, the life of the individual as a national symbolic, the biopic also retains the traditional trope of the Bollywood film: the family. Throughout the films, the family lives of Tendulkar, Dhoni, Azhar, and Manjhi are central to the plot. The support the protagonist receives from the family, and the family's stresses and sacrifies, are variously foregrounded in each of the texts. Thus, even as we are shown Tendulkar fighting on behalf of the nation, it is his family's tense expression that the camera and the plot cut to. In the case of Neerja, too, as the hijacking is in progress, the frame shifts to Neerja's home, with her anxiety-ridden mother and brothers.

But the biopic also makes an interesting dramatic shift. The focus on the immediate family members of the sporting hero, who are by turns worried, anxious, and thrilled, ideologically positions the family as the holding place for the hero's aspirations, success, and even failures. Yet throughout, in the sporting biopic, the camera also pans across the stadium crowd and the country itself, capturing the worry, anxiety, and thrill on the faces of vast crowds of people. In *Neerja*, likewise, the shots showing anxiety on the faces of Neerja's parents cut away to show a similar anxiety on the faces of the family members of the passengers trapped on the hijacked plane, the armed forces, and the administrators (on both sides, India and Pakistan, since the flight was grounded on Pakistani soil).

These biopics, I suggest, subliminally signal the nation-as-family, united in grief (*Neerja*) or triumph (*Sachin*, *M. S. Dhoni*, *Azhar*) by depicting the *same* emotions across the faces of millions of strangers, as affectively connected to the sporting hero and the flight attendant as their blood relations. The biopic, one could say, conflates filiation with affiliation and in the process serves up, again, a crucial subtext of the nation, one that demonstrates and pleads for a cultural citizenship founded on aspirational qualities such as the ones embodied by the biopic subjects.

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ARTIFACTUALITY

Bollywood biopic also adopts a multilayered aesthetic, being positioned ewhere between the documentary and the feature film. The incorporation eal-life scenes and the biographical subject himself in the case of Sachin, nstance, lends an air of realism to the plot, which is then immediately ed in dramatic ways by the entry of professional Bollywood actors such nupam Kher (as Dhoni's father) into the frame. There is a sense of alien- and immediacy as a result of this stylistic technique of the montage, g real-life people and professional actors, to convey the point. The inclu- of the real (as in footage from the matches, TV grabs, people) functions xternal paratexts that add to the information being given to us by the first getic level, the protagonist's life story. The representation of the real in the of a documentary, as Elizabeth Cowie argues, through the "selection ordering of the images and sounds of reality constitute an account of the ld; however, it thereby becomes prey to a loss of the real in its narratives of ry" (1). That is, when the biopic orders frames and selects archival footage terviews so as to generate a sense of the real, we as the audience become re that what is shown on screen is not the entire life of the sporting star. It recisely in enacting the real that the biopic leaves us wondering: what *else* ft out, or what Cowie refers to as "reality *unexcerpted*, that is, unfilmed, le, and without loss, thus not only unrepresented but also unrepresent- " (31, emphasis in original).

This attempt at documenting, albeit dramatically, the real life of the star s the biopic the air of what Stella Bruzzi calls a "performative documen- " (185).[2] The "self-conscious performances by its subjects" ensures that we the enactment of the notion that a documentary only comes into being as performed, that although its factual basis (or document) can pre-date any rding or representation of it" (186). The film itself, argues Bruzzi, "is nec- ily performative because it is given meaning by the interaction between rmance and reality." As a cumulative effect, the so-called truth "acknowl- s the construction and artificiality of even the non-fiction film" (186). en the real-life Dhoni, Tendulkar, or the other real-life Indian cricketers ear in the diegetic space of the biopic, the artificiality even of the biopic ade clear. The biopic, then, as performative documentary is an instance hat Michael Chaney terms "artifactuality" (181), combining artifice (the) and artifact (footage, newspaper records). The making of a public his- around the individual, as constructed in these biopics, draws attention to *mediated* role of not only history (India's cricketing history, for example, the films) but also of the celebrities themselves.

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NOTES

1. "Magic" can also be a human achievement, but the miracle is invariably associated with the divine. See Greenblatt and Platt for a discussion.
2. Bruzzi writes, "the performative documentary uses performance within a non-fiction context to draw attention to the impossibilities of authentic documentary representation" (185).

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THE LIVES OF SAINTS, SINNERS, AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN
THE YEAR IN ITALY

ILARIA SERRA

Lucky Italy is commonly known as a country of saints, artists, and criminals. Eccentric personalities continue to punctuate the biographical production of the past year, reflecting the peculiar characteristics of this nation: its self-complacency, its originality, and its attraction for the odd and the unexplained. The life stories that have captured the attention of publishers belong to saints and demons with many uncommon stories in between—world-renowned entrepreneurs who remain loyal to their small-town roots, an autistic genius and an unknown soldier, a vanishing physicist and a murdered cyclist—and include fewer women than expected, among them the strange case of the novelist Elena Ferrante, whose enigma may have finally unraveled this year.

Biographical writing is valued in Italy, a country that treasures memory, just as it cherishes its historical monuments. It is not necessary to be a luminous personality to earn the honor of a biography, as reflected in the overflowing shelves of the Archivio Diaristico Nazionale of Pieve Santo Stefano in Tuscany. This archive of *scrittura popolare* (people's writing), founded by Saverio Tutino, bestows the honor of memorialization on everyday people. Each year, the Premio Pieve literary prize grants publication to one of these writings salvaged from Italian drawers. In September 2017, the prize was awarded to the epistolary journal by the Venetian Antonio Cocco, an unwitting volunteer in the Foreign Legion, trapped in life's direst snares by a cruel joke of destiny. His one hundred sixty-five letters describe his adventures, beginning with his escape from home after an argument with his high-school teacher. He died at twenty-one in a field in Vietnam.

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THE SAINTS

With Italy as the home country of the Vatican, it comes as no surprise that the biographies of the last three popes occupy the first row on the bookshelves: the life of Pope emeritus, Benedict XVI, narrated by theologian Elio Guerriero; the life of pope and saint John Paul II, told with abundant affection by his personal friend Robert Skrzypczak and by his photographer Arturo Mari; and the life of the current pope, which interestingly turns the title into a provoking question about whether he might be a Marxist: *Papa Francesco marxista?*. In his account of the pope's past, author Diego Siragusa focuses on the relationship of the Cardinal Bergoglio with the leftist governments of Latin America, proposing an unexpected philosophical alliance. Italians remain curious about their popes—those odd political figures and still-revered authorities.

Scores of saints have been canonized in recent years by these popes, their lives showcased as extraordinary role models. The Libreria Editrice Vaticana, the Vatican publishing house, commissioned author Nicola Gori to write the biographies of several *servi di Dio* (servants of God, or people who are on their way to beatification). The most recent publication is *Un genio dell'informatica in cielo*, covering the short life of Carlo Acutis, who was sustained in his suffering of leukemia by his remarkable Catholic faith and, until his early death at age fifteen, exercised the evangelizing power of the internet. In 2016, Giuseppe Cariddi completed the biography of Saint Francis of Paola, titled *Un santo europeo degli umili e dei potenti*, which is an examination of the Calabrian saint who lived during the Renaissance and who, although humble, managed to gain an audience with the kings of France. He led a hermitic life, deeply spiritual, but at the same time was capable of negotiating deals and even feigned disinterest in reaching his goals. How odd that so many Italian saints still live in our midst, their deeds immortally recorded on paper.

THE SINNERS

For every saint, a sinner. The Italian penchant for *dietrologia* (an Italian neologism for the study of what hides behind the scenes, literally, "behind-ology") finds satisfaction in the life stories of the gray eminences who rule from the shadows. Last year's most fascinating antihero is Michele Sindona. In *Sindona: Biografia degli anni Settanta*, Marco Magnani draws the portrait of a larger-than-life criminal, high-profile lawyer, and banker with no scruples. Sindona unabashedly combined legality and illegality in a strategic moral mishmash to serve his purposes, as he simultaneously worked with the Mafia and the state government, the Vatican, the Christian Democratic Party, and the secret

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onic lodge known as P2. He died in 1986 while serving a life sentence
e murder of lawyer Giorgio Ambrosoli. He was poisoned in prison: for
gnani, it was a suicide simulating a homicide, his last Mephistophelian act
l sustained by his "compulsione congenita a escogitare *coups de theatre*"
innate compulsion to invent a *coups de theatre*] (140). Magnani depicts
ona as something more than a man and more of a symptom of national
nctions that have not been deracinated. Now that the emergency of the
s has finished, the system is still "corroso in forme meno eclatanti, ma
rvasive, a lungo andare forse più insidiose. Anche per questo la scelta di
e persone vive nella nostra memoria" [corroded in less dazzling but more
sive ways, maybe more insidious in the long run. Also for this reason,
hoices of those people live in our memory] (145).

Nothing is more fascinating than reading the affairs of a dark underworld
e peer from behind our reading glasses, nestled in the safety of our easy
r. Not one, but two anti-Mafia judges filled the pages with the backroom
ngs of the Mafia trials televised and followed by millions of Italians in the
decades of the past century. Mario Almerighi's *Il testimone: Memorie di
agistrato in prima linea* revives the terror of those series of assassinations
was published only a few days before his death. Pietro Grasso's *Storie di
e, amici e fantasmi* is a survival story—one of a man of justice who lived
g to escape the quicksand of some gloomy years in Italian history. Lastly,
o *nell'ombra* is the engrossing testimony of an *incognito* police officer.
commander of the Gruppo di Intervento Speciale dei Carabinieri, the
ial troops of the Italian police, writes his autobiography but, curiously,
r shows his face (covered by his balaclava) or reveals his name (hidden
er the pseudonym of Comandante Alfa). This "publicly hidden" persona
n Italian paradox: he participates in public debates while keeping his fea-
s cloaked in black wool.

AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN: ITALIAN PRIDE IN THE *HOMO FABER*

el journals have long constituted an important category of Italian memo-
writings. Their authors traveled for commercial purposes, starting with
co Polo, who was firstly a merchant. Today, Italian products are the trav-
, as they are exported and sought after throughout the globe to the ben-
of certain fortunate Italian artisans. The artists of past centuries have pro-
d a template for the artisans of today. They are the last descendants in a
tradition of microeconomies based on small, family-run businesses that
e the fortunes of Italian towns. Trade biographies mix economic data
life events, somewhat similarly to the *libri di famiglia* (Florentine mer-
nt books) of the late Middle Ages, log books that not only kept track of

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sales and acquisitions but also added birthdates, weddings, and other events to their margins. Today's auto/biographies of successful "merchants" are a self-conscious mix of biographical information and product placement, right on the edge between marketing strategy and nationalistic pride. Italian readers seem to find comfort in the successful lives of *gente come noi* (people like us), the fathers (no mothers, this past year) of Made in Italy.

In *Ferrari rex: Biografia di un grande italiano del Novecento*, Luca Dal Monte, director of Maserati and Ferrari Communication in the US, fills eleven hundred pages with the story of Enzo Ferrari, who started as a race-car driver, founded the Formula 1 racing division Scuderia Ferrari, and, at the age of fifty, turned to car-making and designed the iconic red speedster. A dramatic and controversial figure, he died quietly in 1988, at the age of ninety. While the title's nickname of *rex* ("king" in Latin) hints at the devotion of the country to one of its non-dynastic monarchs, the narrative underlines Ferrari's human fragility and reserved life.

Riding the same wave of national pride is Francesco Alberoni's book *Il segreto di Nero Giardini: La vita e l'opera dell'imprenditore Enrico Bracalente* on the life and work of an Italian shoe designer, Enrico Bracalente, founder of the renowned brands NeroGiardini and B. A. G. This family-run company is rooted in the Italian territory of Monte San Pietrangeli, in the Marche region. Bracalente's humble beginnings germinated in the basement of his parish church, rented from his priest. His loyalty compelled him to keep his business in his home country at a time when the economic trend was to exploit a cheaper Romanian labor force. He outsourced only to local factories, which he could easily control thanks to his "availability" (yes, Machiavelli's Prince would smile). This is the "secret" of the title. Author Francesco Alberoni is an established sociologist and an author of bestsellers dedicated to eternal themes such as love, optimism, friendship, hope, and courage. His interest in this shoe company is telling: a life of successful work can become an encouraging, heartwarming life lesson for the entire country.

The same Italian formula, same family portrait, and same entrepreneurial energy produces the life story of another self-made man, Enrico Butali, whose biography by Luca Caneschi is titled *Conta i soldi con le mani*. Butali changed the market for home appliances when he contributed to opening the Euronics supermarkets. Also rising from humble origins, also rooted in his Tuscan homeland, he exemplified the tight relationship between work and money. His uncle taught him a lesson that inspires the title: workers should be paid not by check or bank wire but by giving them cash in hand. These biographies, perhaps marred by the fact that they are propaganda (Butali owns a local TV station), are nonetheless expressions of a country that is willing to believe in an optimistic do-it-yourself philosophy. Today more than ever, Italy needs to remember its days of sunshine.

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Even sports heroes hide mysteries, like Ottavio Bottecchia, a cyclist whose ne has become synonymous with the bicycle he designed and produced. 1924, Bottecchia became the first Italian winner of the Tour de France, the is one of the foremost examples of Italian self-congratulation, keeping mind that Italian cycling has, until recently, been considered Italy's purest most genuine national sport. Claudio Gregori's *Il corno di Orlando: Vita, e misteri di Ottavio Bottecchia* is unusual as it uses an inflated epic style ll the chanson de geste of this modern Paladin Orlando. Bottecchia died celessly, on his bike, during a leisurely outing. He was found by the road- while his bicycle lay a short distance from his body, intact.

MORE ODDITIES

recent biographies offer an unexpected outlook on life writing. They jar- depart from the traditional subjects of well-known and important peo- by focusing on an unknown soldier and a demonized brigand. Historian elio Franzina's *Storia quasi vera del milite ignoto* is a biography without a le protagonist, as it tells "the almost real story of the unknown soldier." nzina blends his imagination with thick historical footnotes to create an eresting portrait of *verosimile* (similar to truth, as the most honest of hy- heses theorized by novelist Alessandro Manzoni). One refracted life tells story of innumerable nameless soldiers who disappeared too early in the ices of history. The text's striking first words are "Avevo compito da poco isei anni quando la scheggia di una granata mi uccise" [I had just turned nty-six when a grenade shard killed me] (3).

Similarly counterintuitive is Gigi Di Fiore's dissenting history, *Briganti!: ro storia della guerra contadina*. In these pages of counter-history, the re- cher turns the page to official records that paint southern rebels as brig- s and lawless characters. His narrative aims to redeem the memory of mine Crocco Donatelli, the leader of a band of desperados, and Cosimo rdano, the bandit who vindicated the Piedmontese massacre of the town Pontelandolfo. These two publications are perhaps the most valid proof of rehabilitating function of memorial writings that revise a previously de- d or forgotten history.

Extremely odd and almost miraculous is the autobiography of a man af- ted by severe autism, thirty-five-year-old Pier Carlo Morello, a college grad- e from the Italian northeast. *Macchia, biografia di un autistico* is written rough facilitated communication with the help of three psychologists and omputer. Morello has never spoken, yet his language is incredibly interest- g and synthetically expressive. As a young boy, he was determined to be his

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mother's shadow. He lived in a world without play, dominated by his fears, enclosed in a bubble: the others grew, created, and lived as he looked on, hiding amid the crowd. Describing himself, he shuffles conventional word order: "Macchia sono, di umana evoluzione" [Stain am I, of human evolution] (25). He reflects on how he can ingest information, record facts and numbers, but cannot use them for daily life: "Meccanica vita è strana, gira per tutti allo stesso modo, ma non per tutti e' valida a baciare i giorni" [Life's mechanism is strange. It turns the same way for everyone, but not for everyone is it useful to kiss the days] (24).

Some Italian lives are still shrouded in a veil of mystery and enjoy the status of unresolved enigmas that fascinate our country. One is the life of Ettore Maiorana, a theoretical physicist who disappeared, leaving behind a laconic letter in 1938, and who inspired many hypotheses regarding his disappearance (some included in Leonardo Sciascia's 1975 essay "La scomparsa di Maiorana"). This year saw the republication, in a concise edition, of Erasmo Recami's 2000 reportage titled *Il vero Ettore Maiorana*. This text raises old questions about the introverted, vanished physicist: did he escape to Argentina to free himself from society's constraints and an overbearing mother? Recami hints at this possibility and thus buys into Luigi Pirandello's fictional case of Mattia Pascal. Maiorana's disappearance may have guaranteed his freedom, but the curiosity of his biographers is inescapable.

In 2016, the important semiotician Umberto Eco died and left a strange will: do not speak about me (in a conference) for ten years. The request halted his colleagues who had been ready to organize a symposium to honor him at the University of Bologna. Books do remain to memorialize such an eminent scholar: *Umberto Eco*, by his disciple Claudio Paolucci, is the first work dedicated to a scholar who knowingly refused to turn into an empty monument to the death of an author. Similarly, author Elena Ferrante hides under a pseudonym that pays homage to the writer Elsa Morante and is a literary mystery: her presumably autobiographical bestselling novels set in Naples have been turned into movies and literary case studies while never betraying her real identity. In 2016, Ferrante published a revised and larger version of an allegedly autobiographical puzzle of letters and documents from her personal drawers: *Frantumaglia*. Here she clarifies her writing process and portrays herself as the daughter of a seamstress, born in Naples. But at the same time as she reveals, she warns: "Io non odio affatto le bugie, nella vita le trovo salutari e vi ricorro quando capita per schermare la mia persona" [I do not hate lies at all. I find them to be healthy in my life and I use them when I need to shade my persona] (79). Everything this author has decided to reveal of

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…lf may be a lie. In October of last year, however, Claudio Gatti published …ch-debated article in the Sunday edition of the respected newspaper *…24 Ore*. In it, he exposes the author and announces that Elena is actually …Roman translator Anita Raja. Using her bank statements and her real-…e purchases, he points the finger at Raja. She is the daughter of a Polish …and the wife of writer Domenico Starnone, and, perhaps not coinciden-…works for Ferrante's publishing house. Neither Raja nor Starnone has …firmed the revelation, and it still remains a mystery: nodding to Michel …cault, we might say that Italy is perhaps one of the few modern countries …e the hand of the system is unable to grab an author's identity.

…EW WOMEN

…mmary glance at this year's biographies reveals a surprising paucity of …en's life stories, right at a time that saw an exponential increase of femi-…s in our country. Women did not make the printed page but for rare cases, …ding actress Anna Magnani in Matteo Persica's *Anna Magnani: Biogra-…di una donna*, feminist publisher Laura Lepetit in *Autobiografia di una …minista distratta*, and cancer survivor Anna Savini in *Buone ragioni per …re in vita*. Two female authors have told stories of family friends: Elvira …a, neighbor of Grazia Deledda, dedicated *Grazia Deledda* to the Sardin-…writer and 1926 winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature. This new biogra-…weaves the author's personal memories with the hunt for the homes that …zia inhabited—an unusual, fascinating search. Anna Profumi, daughter …e general of the monarchic army, wrote *Una donna, una regina: Biografia …Maria Jose di Savoia, la "regina di Maggio,"* the life story of Maria José of …y, queen of Italy for a month, in 1946, just before the national referen-…m transformed the country into a republic and sent the entire Savoy fam-…into exile. Not even one Italian woman is included in the last biographi-…account by journalist Cristina De Stefano, who now lives in Paris. After …icating a biography to Oriana Fallaci in 2014, her latest *Scandalose: Vite di …re libere* includes Cuban, British, American, French anticonformist women …but not one free, scandalous, Italian gal. How very odd.

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LIFE WRITING IN THE MAKING
THE YEAR IN KOREA

HEUI-YUNG PARK

the second half of 2016, a notable number of life writing texts, especial-emoirs and autobiographies, have appeared in South Korea. Though fine ctions are drawn between memoirs and autobiographies by life writ-pecialists such as Lee Quinby, Julie Rak, and Nancy K. Miller, in Korea moirs tend to represent life stories of renowned figures, while autobiogra-s tell those of the less privileged in society due to class, gender, or some r marginalized status. Recently, educational books and workshops on to write and publish one's own stories have proliferated. Such recent de-pments in Korean life writing show us the field's shaping characteristics, t with some cautions, and suggest ways it may continue to grow.

Among the various genres of life narratives, *hoegorok* (memoirs) have ap-ed in greater numbers in recent years, paralleling somewhat the memoir m that Julie Rak describes in North America. Memoirs published in South ea since mid-2016 include the thirty-fourth Minister of Foreign Affairs Trade Song Min-sun's *Pingha nŭn umjiginda: pihaekhwa wa t'ongil oegyo yŏnjang* (2016); Chŏng Tar-yŏng's *Chŏng Tar-yŏng hoegorok* (2017); the ister of Construction from 1963 to 1964 Chŏng Nag-ŭn's *Chŏng Nag-ŭn gorok* (2017); Han Yong-wŏn's *Han Yong-wŏn hoegorok* (2017); and Presi-of South Korea from 1980 to 1988 Chun Doo Hwan's *Chŏn Tu-hwan gorok* (2017), which consists of three volumes. Compared to publications he late twentieth century, when a maximum of three and a minimum of came out each year, the number of titles published in 2016 and 2017 is e significant.

The memoirs above represent a few established trends in Korea. More n than not, memoirs are written by important political figures or people o have been successful in their professions. Song, the writer of *Pingha nŭn giginda*, started his career as a diplomat in the mid-1970s and continued to

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be involved in foreign policy and national security over the next thirty years. He then became a member of the eighteenth National Assembly and served until recently as the president of the University of North Korean Studies. Although less well known, another example is Chŏng Tar-yŏng, who worked as an accounts manager at a South Korean conglomerate, Hyosung Corporation. And in the recently published memoir by a highly successful political figure, Chun describes being born to very poor parents during Korea's colonial period and eventually governing the country in the 1980s. As these examples suggest, memoirs in Korea have largely become an exclusive genre, practiced by those with social status and what they present as an authority they have earned because they are self-made.

That memoirs quite often represent the lives of successful men in the political or social sphere can be partly attributed to the publication of memoirs in previous decades by Korean presidents after they have retired from the presidency. Apart from the obvious exception of exiled and assassinated leaders, Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee, respectively, most presidents, often with the help of their supporting staff, have written and published their life stories. A list would include Yun Bo-seon's *Oeroun nanal ŭi sŏnt'ak* (1991); Kim Yŏng-sam's *Kim Yŏng-sam hoegorok: Minjujuŭi rŭl wihan na ŭi t'ujaeng* (2000); Roh Moo-hyun's *Unmyŏng ida* (2010); Roh Tae-woo's *No T'ae-u hoegorok* (2011); Kim Dae-jung's *Kim Dae-jung chasŏjŏn 1 & 2* (2011); and Lee Myung-bak's *Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi sigan, 2008–2013* (2015). With the exception of *Kim Dae-jung chasŏjŏn*, which declares itself to be an autobiography even though its structure and its contents, such as his successes and excellent qualities, are similar to the other volumes, all of the above publications are entitled or generally referred to as memoirs, confirming that this genre provides the stories of those whose lives are worthy of being reflected upon, recorded, and read—the lives of presidents, for instance.

The above memoirs also deliver stereotypical contents for autobiographical stories of those who deserve public attention. Similar to most biographies of well-known people published in the West, the East, and Korea, these memoirs generally follow chronologically writers' birth and early years through to their adult life, highlighting along the way those accomplishments and outstanding qualities that led them to be national leaders. Especially for former presidents, or those active in politics, discourses of anti-Communism and democracy are frequent, even dominant, themes in their memoirs. This prevalence is because of Korea's historical and political circumstances, divided into the democratic South and the communist North by the Korean War (1950–1953), followed by the Cold War. Since the late 1990s, however, a dialogue of reunification has also emerged.

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Some of the most recent memoirs, such as Song's *Pingha nŭn umjiginda* Chun's *Chŏn Tu-hwan hoegorok*, have created controversy because their ors have been accused of falsifying the truth. These disputes involve the sible appropriation of memoirs for political purposes, and for that reason represent potential danger to those they represent and even the writers mselves. *Pingha nŭn umjiginda* focuses on Song's diplomatic efforts and cesses in the 2000s with Korea's neighboring countries and allies, such as na, Japan, Russia, and the US, all with the goal of preventing the North m developing its nuclear program. The still-ongoing controversy involves g's presentation of Mun Jae-in, the current president who served as a presi- tial secretary for Roh Moo-hyun, as a North Korean sympathizer (451). en the book came out, Mun was preparing for the 2017 election as one the most likely candidates to become the next president. In the current tical environment, where long-standing anti-Communist sentiments are strong despite the emergent discourse of reunification, Song's statement ld have resulted in Mun's loss in the election. Believing that Song wished eaken Mun's popularity, his supporting party accused Song of lying and ming Mun's reputation. Mun won the election and became the nineteenth sident of South Korea, but the truthfulness of Song's representation is still der investigation.

Chun's *Chŏn Tu-hwan hoegorok* has provoked far greater debate because hallenges some of the "truths" in Korean history regarding the May 18 mocratic Uprising, or the Gwangju Democratization Movement, which urred from May 18 to 27, 1980. Up until this writing, in fall 2017, most reans have believed that Chun, who seized power soon after president k's assassination in 1979, victimized many local students and Gwangju izens who demonstrated against his authoritarian government to maintain s rule and dominance of the country. And, yet, in his memoir, Chun de- s all these accusations, arguing that he was not involved in suppressing e movement, which he believes was instigated by pro-Communists and ir followers, rather than by democratic activists and citizens. Expressing s wish to "correct" a Korean history that has criminalized him, he instead uses subsequent presidents, including Roh Tae-woo and Kim Yŏng-sam, falsely indicting him for crimes he did not commit.

Soon after the publication of *Chŏn Tu-hwan hoegorok* in April 2017, *ğöt i algo sipta*, a national TV show that investigates unsolved crimes and portant social issues, questioned the validity of Chun's statements. The witnesses to the events and the victims themselves who were interviewed a very different story from Chun's and further testify to the cruelty of government troops, who attacked civilians at random, whether they were

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involved in the movement or not. Lawsuits in response to the memoir followed, and, in early August 2017, the court declared Chun's account historically untruthful and banned his memoir from distribution and sale. Chun objected then and has continued to defend his representation of the period.

The controversies over Song's and Chun's memoirs, and their eventual outcomes, show how life stories can be appropriated by the accusing or the accused, with lurking dangers for all involved. The intensity and widespread familiarity of these debates also suggest that the impact of memoirs written by important figures upon Korean readers, society, and even history is increasing. That Song and Chun are so clearly using their memoirs to represent the truth according to their own perspectives, and that others so vehemently attack these representations, are evidence of how substantial memoir's impact is perceived to be.

If memoirs are recognized as a field of life writing for the exclusive and the distinguished, autobiographies in Korea show life stories of the other, including the working class, women, and those considered less extraordinary. For instance, poet and reporter O To-yŏp's *Nae abŏjidŭl ŭi chasŏjŏn: 'Abŏji' ranŭn irŭm ŭi nodong e taehan sŏngch'al* (2016) is comprised of the stories of working-class people unable to write their own lives for various reasons, including a lack of time and resources, or due to illiteracy. This collection displays the changing understanding of autobiographical stories in Korea over the past decades in two important ways. First, it crosses the generic boundaries of life narratives. O interviewed his subjects and recorded their stories as told to him so *Nae abŏjidŭl ŭi chasŏjŏn* is partially an oral history. Second, the collection is O's own auto/biographical work, because he includes personal stories and those of his deceased father.

O as the narrator introduces the untold or neglected stories of underprivileged workers now in their sixties and seventies, including a barber, laundryman, blacksmith, shoemaker, and tailor. These stories point to the value of work lost or forgotten in contemporary Korean society. Generally, each story begins with O's description of his interviewee's humble shop and then unfolds the story of how the interviewee has devoted his life to his work through his apprenticeship since childhood or adolescence. One way or another, they all spent the prime of their lives doing hard labor in the 1970s and 1980s, when Korea's economy was rapidly developing. Although contributing in their own way to creating the Miracle on the Han River—that period when the country's economy quickly grew after the Korean War—Korea's industrialization, modernization, and globalization, and most decisively, the IMF Crisis in 1993, when the bubble economy collapsed, left the interviewees unprotected and vulnerable. Despite their financial and other difficulties, their sense of pride for what they do and for their craftsmanship has helped sustain them

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their small businesses. By telling these stories of marginalized, working-people, O's collection criticizes the current social environment, which to equate the values of one's labor with monetary compensation.

Nae abŏjidŭl ŭi chasŏjŏn also includes stories about O and his father, was too busy working to spend time with his son during his early years remained largely absent in his life. When, however, his elderly father diagnosed with lung cancer, O looked after him until he passed away. ough this experience, O came to realize his father's lifetime of sacrifices his family. In short, O finally "found" his lost father and concludes that her" is not an identity, but instead an occupation because, as the head his household, he was obliged to work to support his family. Tracing and rding the life stories of laborers, including his father, allows O to recon- to his own father and "offer him a book that he could read" (308). In sense, *Nae abŏjidŭl ŭi chasŏjŏn* is O's and his father's auto/biographical —and possibly a story for all working-class fathers whose labor has been appreciated than it deserves.

Korean autobiographies are featuring women's stories as well. Although men's life writing has been largely missing from the Korean market, since 2016 a small handful of women have published their life stories. Among se stories are Kim Hyun Sook's *Na ŭi haengdong i kot na ŭi unmyŏng ida* 17) and Lee Soon-ja's *Tangsin ŭn oeropchi ant'a* (2017). Kim and Lee are from being ordinary women. Kim is the CEO of Kyungshin Corpora- , and Lee was the first lady in the early 1980s. Kim's life story shows how turned away from her domestic life to become a professional woman, llenging the traditional binary notion of gender roles. Despite many chal- ges, her accomplishments stress her exceptional qualities paralleling or n superior to those of men. Lee's autobiography reflects the male-centered ture deeply rooted in Korean society. The book appeared in late March 7, about a week earlier than her husband Chun Doo Hwan's controversial moir, and she focuses on Chun's life, since Lee had known him since her rs. Aiming to defend him against indictments, her story underscores his hievements and devotion to the country during his presidency. Politically tivated, Lee's *Tangsin ŭn oeropchi ant'a* first played a supporting role for un, but now is his strongest public defense, since his own memoir is no ger available in the marketplace.

Instructional books and workshops on how to write autobiographical ries have also risen in number. Yim Sun-ch'ŏl's *Chasŏjŏn: Na wa saesang kirok* (2016), Cho Sŏng-il's *Na ŭi insaeng yiyagi chasŏjŏn ssŭgi* (2017), and n Min-jeŏng's *Abŏji chasŏjŏn not'ŭ* (2017) all testify to the developing erest in expressing oneself by writing about one's own life. "Kwagŏ rŭl apogo mirae rŭl sŏlgye hada" was a workshop series offered from June to

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October 2017 that taught the public about autobiographies in general, and suggested that people write and publish personal stories. Sponsored by the government, this workshop is especially designed so that seniors can "share their wisdom with the next generation and society" (Yim 48), suggesting that life writing can actually provide a social service for a specific group of people and for the general public. Increasingly then, in Korea, writing one's own story is not only an individual but a social activity that benefits the writers, their readers, and society at large.

Despite the contributions that these how-to books and workshops are making, and likely will continue to make, to informing the public about life writing and writing autobiographical stories, they are restrictive in several ways. The intended readers of Yim's *Chasŏjŏn* and *Abŏji chasŏjŏn not'ŭ* and the invited participants in "Kwagŏ rŭl torapogo" are the middle-aged and the elderly, setting age or generational limits to potential writers of individual stories. *Abŏji chasŏjŏn not'ŭ* encourages married men with children to write about their lives; its call for *abŏjidŭl* (fathers) implicitly dismisses mothers, women in general, and unmarried men. In terms of content, these books tend to stress the educational purposes of autobiography as providing a "spiritual heritage" for the next generation, whose members can learn "good" things about their fathers and grandfathers (Cho 24). Through these male stories, then, young readers are encouraged to inherit and perpetuate the legacies of patriarchy—to follow in "his" footsteps.

Recent developments in Korean life writing foreground how memoirs and autobiography represent one's life story, and how instructional books and workshops can encourage readers and participants to write their own stories. Like biographies written in Korea and elsewhere, though, memoirs often devote themselves to the respectable parts of the lives of those deemed significant in current society. And yet, the controversies over Song's and Chun's works point to the political intentions and appropriations that can damage those people who are negatively or erroneously represented, as well as the writers themselves. Autobiographies seem less exclusive and more fluid than memoirs for potential writers, representing a possibility for those less privileged in society. With the growing number of how-to books and workshops, it seems reasonable to predict that in the years ahead, autobiography will become the most widely practiced genre of life writing in Korea. Because of the many critical and dramatic moments in Korea's modern history and society, including the Korean War, decades of dictatorships, and rapid economic development and industrialization followed by the IMF Crisis, Koreans from all walks of life have more stories to tell and to read, and life writing will provide a conduit for many of them.

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DISPUTAS POR LA MEMORIA
EL AÑO EN MÉXICO

GRACIELA DE GARAY Y GERARDO NECOECHEA

"Memory Contested: The Year in Mexico." Three books attracted attention in the course of the last year and a half. Taken separately, each book is different. One is an academic biography written by Aurelia Valero Pie on the Spanish philosopher José Gaos, who emigrated to Mexico in 1938 because of the Spanish Civil War. Cristina Rivera Garza, an outstanding contemporary writer, wrote a book on novelist and photographer Juan Rulfo, reputedly the most important twentieth-century Mexican author. Both authors write unconventional biographies, one pursuing connections between autobiographical observation and philosophical thinking, the other tracing employment experiences. The third book, by Agustín Acosta Zavala, is an autobiographic testimony of urban social movements in the city of Monterrey, in northern Mexico, from the late 1960s to the early 1980s.

But taken together, the books bring to light clashing views on the social functions of memory. Valero Pie faces the dilemma of making public the autobiographical writing of Gaos, found in his private papers, and thus confronting the larger problem of the vicarious interest in any piece of life writing. In the case of the other two authors, the problems of memory arise from the reception of their work: the issue of property and trademark in the case of Rulfo, and, in the case of Acosta Zavala, the question of state policies regarding police archives. Thus, in Mexico, memory is today a contested terrain in cultural politics.

La escritura de vida en México despliega vitalidad, sin llegar a ser motivo de auge editorial. En los últimos años han aparecido numerosos testimonios autobiográficos relacionados a la intensa movilización y represión de la izquierda durante la Guerra Fría, y queremos ocuparnos aquí de uno de estos testimonios: *Así lo recuerdo,* de Agustín Acosta Zavala (2015). La producción de biografías convencionales acerca de personajes importantes mantiene el canon, aunque ofrece cierto giro en el enfoque. Queremos ocuparnos también de dos de estas biografías aparecidas en los últimos meses: *José Gaos en México: una biografía intelectual* de Aurelia Valero Pie (2015) y *Había mucha neblina*

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…mo o no sé qué de Cristina Rivera Garza (2016). Nos ocupamos de estos …os no porque sean representativos de tendencias, sino porque provocan a la …exión acerca de la cultura y la memoria en el México del presente.

Rivera Garza escribe acerca del escritor y fotógrafo mexicano Juan Rulfo …17–1986). Valero Pie incursiona en la vida y pensamiento de José Gaos, …sofo español que migró a México en 1938 debido a la Guerra Civil en Es…a. Acosta Zavala relata principalmente sus vivencias en los movimientos …diantiles y populares urbanos de la década de 1970. Rivera Garza y Valero …privilegian las décadas medias del siglo XX, mientras que Acosta Zavala …ra sucesos de fines de los años sesenta a principios de los ochenta. Rivera …rza escribe que su interés por la obra de Rulfo inició muchos años antes, …o que en este libro le interesa indagar en la experiencia del trabajo asala…do y, en consecuencia, dirige la mirada a la tensión entre la responsabili…d en el mundo cotidiano y la producción creativa. También Acosta Zavala …ergó la intención de contar su testimonio desde mucho antes de iniciar la …itura, por razones que son comunes a los testimonios de militantes de iz…ierda de la época. Contar, primero, lo que otros, debido a su muerte, ya no …eden hacer (declaración inusitada porque él no estuvo involucrado en una …anización política armada); esclarecer, segundo, lo sucedido porque otras …aciones deliberadamente han tergiversado los hechos. Valero Pie, histo…adora y filósofa, hace en cambio un trabajo académico de reconstrucción de …a biografía intelectual. Los propósitos e historias son distintos, pero suby…a cierta afinidad que recuerda la idea de Salman Rushdie de que para contar …a vida hay que tragarse el mundo.

Valero Pie consultó archivos y papeles personales en México y España, …revistó a alumnos y a la hija de Gaos, y revisó cuantiosa bibliografía y …emerografía. La autora fijó la atención en las ideas, como indica la noción …biografía intelectual. Explica que no presenta una biografía pura, sino el re…ado de un doble proceso. El primero consiste en recoger las imágenes que …ismo Gaos construyó de sí mismo a través de sus ejercicios de introspec…n y rememoraciones dada la centralidad que ocupa el sujeto en su proyecto …sófico: el segundo se refiere "al tránsito de las representaciones de sí a las …esentaciones del otro o, dicho de otro modo, entre la autobiografía y la …grafía" (14). Ella asienta el pacto con el lector de decir la verdad sobre su …uriosa investigación, su conocimiento filosófico, y su aplicación del método …órico de crítica de fuentes.

Rivera Garza igualmente investigó en diversas fuentes, procedimiento que …firma la seriedad e incluso veracidad de lo que escribe. La autora, sin em…go, consideró más importante ganar la confianza del lector reclamando …enticidad para su impulso, nacido de la pasión y la obsesión, a hurgar en la

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vida de Rulfo, y que la llevó a reescribir y jugar con las palabras y las formas de su obra. La apropiación descrita sustenta su derecho a estar no solo en las palabras, sino en los zapatos del escritor; y de manera literal, ya que rastrea los itinerarios que de él conoce.

También en pos de la confianza, Acosta Zavala cita la afirmación de Jorge Luis Borges: se escribe para conmover y no para convencer. Escribe para los convencidos, con el propósito de remover sus reminiscencias. El título, *Así lo recuerdo*, expresa la parcialidad de su punto de vista a la vez que inhibe toda refutación excepto la que inicie con la frase "yo lo recuerdo distinto": las "rectificaciones y enmendaduras" de quienes estuvieron ahí y "compartieron trinchera" (7). Funda su derecho a proceder de esa manera en la frase de José Saramago: "Nosotros tenemos razón, la razón que asiste a quien propone que se construya un mundo mejor antes de que sea demasiado tarde" (5). A fin de cuentas, no reclama la posesión de la verdad, sino el derecho a testimoniar públicamente porque tiene razón, de manera similar a como Rivera Garza clava su estaca en el territorio de Rulfo amparada en la idea de Bernstein del cuidado puesto "en y por el mundo" (19).

Rivera Garza opta por indagar acerca del escritor en relación a su mundo y no a su obra. Para situar a ese individuo en contexto, realiza una amplia desviación por la cotidianeidad material y se pregunta cómo pudo trabajar para escribir, de manera que sigue a su biografiado en sus empleos asalariados. Explica, situada en el presente y externa al mundo que observa, que el trabajo asalariado de Rulfo contribuyó a forjar imagen y discurso del Milagro Mexicano, engendro del desarrollo económico y la modernidad. Al mismo tiempo, y desde el interior de la obra creativa, quiere entender cómo en su escritura y en sus fotografías presentó e indagó acerca del mundo destruido o dejado de lado en el proceso. Se trata de una tensión irresoluble que conformó no solo la vida del escritor, sino la de la moderna sociedad mexicana.

Por esta razón asemeja a Rulfo con el ángel de la historia que Walter Benjamin describe: cuerpo de frente empujado irremisiblemente hacia el futuro por el ventarrón del progreso, pero la vista vuelta atrás, hacia esa pila de enormes desastres que es el pasado. Precisamente, esa es la imagen que enlaza la biografía de Rulfo y el testimonio de Acosta Zavala. El segundo narra el tiempo posterior, en el que los marginados del progreso, en rebelión contra el ángel de la historia, marcharon a la ciudad y lucharon por alcanzar las promesas de la elusiva modernidad.

Los propósitos de los autores trazaron, al menos en parte, los cauces de su escritura. Aquí encontramos similitudes formales. El texto de Rivera Garza no sigue la artificial cronología lineal que inicia con el nacimiento y termina con la muerte; por el contrario, brinca hacia adelante y hacia atrás en los años. El testimonio de Acosta Zavala también rompe la linealidad progresiva: narra un largo momento, y tal como suele hacerlo la memoria, omite marcadores

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vencionales de tiempo, va de una anécdota a otra, y rompe la narración pasado para saltar al presente, ya sea para contrastar el antes y el después, ea para dar cuenta de desenlaces que rebasan los confines de su testimo-. Valero Pie confina la biografía al momento de madurez y se interesa por procesos más que por la cronología, lo cual permite observar el carácter no gresivo y sí contingente, contradictorio, y a veces incoherente que tiene la . En los tres autores, el presente está continuamente ahí, como preocupa- que orienta su curiosidad y problematiza el pasado narrado.

La similitud más atractiva resulta de la falta de apego estricto al género bi- fico o al testimonial. Valero Pie, como hemos señalado, por fuerza transi- tre la autobiografía y la biografía de Gaos; también en los otros dos textos tramos de biografía y autobiografía. Acosta Zavala combina la escritura de oria convencional con historias orales y crónicas periodísticas de la época cluso introduce sucesos que quedan fuera de su horizonte temporal y ter- rial. Rivera Garza añade pasajes de ficción y hace reportaje de sus propios rridos por la geografía y por los archivos, con toques de ensayo estético y lisis textual. Entre mezclas y fusiones, los autores producen textos híbridos atrapan la atención.

Los espacios son narrados de forma distinta. Mientras con Rivera Garza vesamos la geografía mexicana, con Acosta Zavala estamos fijos en un gmento del área urbana. Rivera Garza se detiene a describir paisajes reales Rulfo fotografió y usó para crear los lugares ficticios de su obra. Acosta ala apenas ofrece unos trazos para familiarizarnos con el entorno físico. ro Pie, aunque transita por diversas geografías, espacios laborales, y en- bres conflictivos de relaciones con sus pares, en realidad privilegia el es- io interno del pensamiento. Hay, sin embargo, un rasgo similar y es que guno narra sucesos ocurridos en los pequeños espacios de la privacidad. hay casa, menos aún hogar, y vida amorosa o familiar.

Esta ausencia de espacios íntimos está relacionada con el desinterés por terioridad del sujeto. Acosta Zavala menciona pocos momentos reflexi- que no tienen que ver directamente con los asuntos y las tareas públicas a plir. Lo más cercano a una mirada incisiva dirigida a sí mismo es la anéc- en que relata estar con un amigo, después de acompañar la invasión de predio urbano por los sin casa, ambos observando la lluvia bajo un plásti- ostenido por tres varas, mientras el autor alberga la esperanza de que su go renuncie ahí mismo al activismo para él unirse a la deserción. Ninguno pió el silencio. Fuera de este pasaje introspectivo, la vida narrada transcur- en viviendas improvisadas con cartones y varilla, en urbanizaciones rudi- tarias, en interminables asambleas, y ruidosas y valientes manifestaciones jeras.

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Rivera Garza busca a Rulfo en la vida pública cotidiana. Por esa razón, un crítico reclama y señala que es mejor buscar a Rulfo en su obra, sin entender que no es la mirada introspectiva o la interioridad del escritor lo que la autora busca. Le interesa conocer al sujeto que en su vida pública mira hacia afuera, hacia el mundo. Investigó, con ese propósito, por ejemplo, en los expedientes archivados de la Comisión para el Desarrollo de la Cuenca del Papaloapan.

Rulfo trabajó para la Comisión haciendo informes y fotografías de comunidades a las orillas del río Papaloapan. Uno de los emprendimientos fue la construcción de una presa, que necesitó de inundar poblados en una amplia zona y desalojar y reubicar a los residentes. Rivera Garza encontró en el archivo al Rulfo contradictorio, convencido por las promesas del progreso, pero a la vez testigo melancólico del desastre que lo instituye. Pareciera que la autora sigue la exhortación metodológica de Collingwood a reescenificar mentalmente el pasado para comprender los actos y pensamientos del otro, y por ello recorre los lugares de trabajo y las comunidades visitadas por el escritor, advirtiendo que "uno no puede sentir lo sentido por otro" pero sí puede estar en los mismos lugares, "en ese sitio compartido, y sentir lo propio" (18). En consecuencia, no descubre la interioridad del escritor, sino el enojo que a ella le causa que Rulfo no fuera consciente "de la magnitud—económica, cultural, política—de los proyectos con los que colaboraba" y le reclama por no haberlo denunciado. Pero, a fin de cuentas, concede: Rulfo era un hombre de su tiempo y los tiempos han cambiado, era un escritor y no un ideólogo. "Lo increpo. Después lo entiendo. Al rato hago las paces con él" (20).

Contrasta este reclamo de conciencia social crítica que hace Rivera Garza, con el capítulo más interesante del libro acerca de José Gaos que trata de su involucramiento con sus pares locales. Aquí se advierte la preocupación de Gaos por producir un pensamiento original con "su filosofía de las filosofías", inspirada en los autores del vitalismo y la fenomenología alemanes que convierte los *Erlebnisse*, o vivencias, en protagonistas del pensamiento. Para resolver la crisis de la filosofía contemporánea y, en consecuencia, de su propia existencia, el filósofo proponía observar y escribir sobre su propia experiencia, a lo que llamó *jornadas filosóficas* y, a partir de éstas, elaborar una teoría general del Hombre. Los escritos indagan en la interioridad, pero no en la intimidad privada; son una introspección intelectual desprovista de pormenores cotidianos o de afectos. Es la mirada neokantiana dirigida al interior para a su vez observar a la sociedad contemporánea.

Usar las *jornadas filosóficas* de Gaos confrontó a Valero Pie con un problema de ética académica. ¿Es válido usar y dar a conocer escritos personales que permanecieron privados? El problema es, por supuesto, más amplio, en tanto que el interés vicario por la escritura de vida contribuye a comercializar la publicación de correspondencia, papeles personales, e incluso anotaciones de lecturas. La autora resuelve que, en primer lugar, su biografiado tuvo la

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ención de que sus jornadas fueran conocidas y, en segundo, que se justifica so porque la reconstrucción se asemeja a la microhistoria y permite obser- grandes procesos sociales a través de la vida de un hombre. Precisamente que *José Gaos en México* es un libro de corte académico, las preocupaciones as se resuelven bajo criterios académicos.

La recepción de los libros de Rivera Garza y de Acosta Zavala dirige nues- tención a las disputas públicas en torno a la memoria y la cultura en el xico actual. Varias reseñas críticas saludaron la publicación de *Había mu- neblina o humo o no sé qué* como era de esperarse debido a la importancia la autora. Pero hubo un incidente de particular interés ocurrido en relación Fiesta del Libro y de la Rosa, que la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de xico organiza anualmente y en este año incluía la conmemoración del cen- ario del nacimiento de Juan Rulfo. La Fundación Juan Rulfo aceptó prim- y canceló después su participación en el festejo y pidió eliminar toda ref- cia al autor. El director de la Fundación expresó su desacuerdo con que se sentara el libro de Rivera Garza en dicha Fiesta del Libro, porque el libro difamatorio y la escritora era una "pobre señora que de estudiosa no tiene ". Rivera Garza pidió a los lectores que formaran su propia opinión, pero sideró importante oponerse al autoritarismo y debatir si la literatura podía propiedad privada o era un bien común. La universidad, por su parte, de- ó que era una institución plural, incluyente y crítica y que seguiría con la bración y mantendría las puertas abiertas a la Fundación.

El incidente no pasaría de ser una anécdota curiosa si no fuera por la va política cultural en México. La ley de cultura recientemente aprobada sforma la noción de cultura: la anterior definición antropológica de cul- como modo de vida ahora es sustituida por una definición que restringe ampo cultural a los productos de las artes, humanidades, y ciencias. La ura, reducida a productos, puede ser propiedad privada administrada para ner ganancia, y no un bien común constitutivo de la colectividad. En este exto, es ominoso que la Fundación haya registrado el nombre de Juan o como propiedad industrial—además que explica su conducta de pro- ión al buen nombre de la marca registrada.[1]

La presentación del libro de Acosta Zavala incluyó a algunos antiguos pañeros de organización que posteriormente hicieron carrera política. de ellos afirmó que era necesario reconocer a los héroes cuyo esfuerzo struyó "el país que hoy tenemos". Otro hizo referencia a que la historia movilización popular en Monterrey había sido silenciada anteriormente razones políticas y que el libro, si bien relataba una memoria que duele, bién era necesario para entender "las nuevas oportunidades democráticas" tras con verdad"). La publicación del libro por el Senado y la presentación na sala de la cámara legislativa sugiere que existe apertura y pluralidad re- o a las múltiples versiones acerca del pasado reciente.

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A diferencia del enfrentamiento entre Rivera Garza y la Fundación Rulfo, la publicación de testimonios autobiográficos acerca de los movimientos de oposición parece dar fe de que el autoritarismo y silenciamiento terminó. No obstante, sigue existiendo una memoria soterrada y difícilmente accesible; es la memoria de la represión. Ese pasado sigue estando en el presente y el breve periodo de libertad de información es torpedeado por disposiciones que nuevamente cierran acceso so pretexto de salvaguardar la privacidad de los individuos. La memoria omitida que realmente duele yace en esos archivos.

La pluralidad aparente esconde la disputa por dominar la memoria. Puede ser por la vía de convertirla en propiedad privada y reglamentar su uso o puede ser por la vía de esconder partes vitales para nuestro entendimiento del pasado. De una u otra manera, continua el afán de imponer una versión limitada de la experiencia.

NOTA

1. Los periódicos en Ciudad de México reportaron el incidente; ver, por ejemplo, *El Universal* (6, 8, y 24 de abril de 2017), a favor de la escritora, y *La Jornada* (16 y 19 de mayo), a favor de la Fundación; ver también el extenso reportaje de Minerva Anaid Turriza ("Juan Rulfo, marca registrada. Fundación rima con inquisición").

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OUTSIDERS' PERSPECTIVES IN DUTCH BIOGRAPHY
THE YEAR IN THE NETHERLANDS

HANS RENDERS AND DAVID VELTMAN

ber contribution to the edited volume *The Biographical Turn: Lives in His-*
, South African researcher Lindie Koorts introduces Herman Giliomee's
Afrikaners: Biography of a People as "arguably the most influential contri-
ion to post-1994 Afrikaner historiography" (150). The selection of "promi-
t individuals" who were honored with a short biography in this book was
based upon a canon of Afrikaner heroes but on a political theory outlined
the American scholar Michael Walzer. Walzer describes the "connected
ic" as the individual who is bound to his community, although observing
om the periphery to remain critical of its injustices (xi). This concept of
"connected critic" offers insight into the question how biography can give
ge to a community, including or excluding the way a subject criticizes so-
y's policies and practices. Biographies of "connected critics" will focus on
t makes these critics committed to their society. A biography on someone
o has chosen to position themselves from an outsider's perspective will pay
ention to the forces that drove the subject to choose a different path, with-
engaging in politics or opinion-making. Biographies of connected crit-
do not necessarily have to be about politicians: biographers choose to de-
their subjects by underscoring their subjects' struggles as outsiders whose
ions are eventually celebrated by the public. It is our aim to show that
s type of biography is gaining popularity these days in the Netherlands.

The Dutch book market is oriented internationally because a large num-
of foreign biographies are translated into Dutch. Examples include Si-
n Schama's *The Face of Britain: The Nation through Its Portraits*, Gareth
dman Jones's *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion*, Julia Bird's *Victoria: The*
een, Victor Sebestyen's *Lenin the Dictator*, Laurence Bergreen's *Casanova:*
e World of a Seductive Genius, and Thore D. Hanssen's *Brunhilde Pomsel:*
German Life. The weekly newspaper *Vrij Nederland* featured in 2016 an

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eight-page interview with noted biographer Richard Holmes (Renders and Vullings). But there is also a substantial subcategory of biographies of foreign people written by Dutch authors. Cas J. J. van Houtert, for example, wrote a biography of the German medieval emperor Friedrich II, and Jaap Verheul published a full-length biography of John Lothrop Motley, the nineteenth-century historian who made Holland popular among Americans.

Many contemporary Dutch biographers are positioning their Dutch subjects as outsiders with a personal perspective on Dutch society. On the first page of Graa Boomsma's *Leven op de rand*, his biography of Albert Alberts (1911–1995), this Dutch author is called a *buitenstaander* [outsider]. Alberts's work as a writer is difficult to classify: next to his novels and collections of literary stories, he wrote historical books, biographies, and memoirs. In his home village, Blaricum, Alberts was called a *sfinx* (sphinx) for his ability to speak out frankly and to be introverted at the same time. Working at the Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, the ministry of foreign affairs, in Den Haag, Alberts was able to do research for his historical novels during lunchtime: his office was right next door to the *Koninklijke Bibliotheek*. These circumstances enabled him to live the life of an outsider who never wanted to draw attention to his own personal matters. Alberts was perfectly aware of the way he was representing himself and chose to keep himself far from political debate. His biographer, Boomsma, stresses Alberts's role as a journalist at the leftist-intellectual magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer*, a job he held from 1947 onward. Even before the Netherlands began their ill-fated "police actions" to restore law and order in the Dutch Indies, Alberts, as a former administrative employee, wrote critical articles about the role of the colonial regime.

Last year another biography of a "connected critic," in Walzer's sense, appeared in the Netherlands: Elly Kamp's book on Ferdinand Bordewijk (1884–1965). As the second biography of the same person, this kind of text is highly unusual in the Netherlands. The justification for publishing a second biography on Bordewijk may be that Kamp's text is a dual biography: it also features the story of Bordewijk's wife, Johanna Bordewijk-Roepman. Ferdinand Bordewijk is known for texts that incorporate magical realism, including his novellas *Blokken*, *Knorrende beesten*, and *Bint*, but he was made famous by his novel *Karakter*, published in 1938. Johanna Bordewijk-Roepman was a composer and, according to Kamp, very famous in her time. Although much has been written about Bordewijk, including Reinold Vugs's biography of him in 1995, almost nothing was known about his wife until this latest publication. Since Kamp's research is the first to be supported by the Bordewijk family, her book contains a good amount of new information.

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The work of Louis Couperus, author of *Eline Vere*, *De stille kracht*, *Van menschen: De dingen die voorbij gaan*, and *De boeken der kleine zielen*, is being read and performed in theaters. In 1933 Henri van Booven published the first biography of Couperus, and from the tone of the biography, it is easy to tell that they were close friends. Couperus's next biographer was Frédéric Bastet, whose 1987 biography caused an outrage, because the book was more of an inventory of anecdotes than a story with a beginning and end, although Bastet had already defended himself against this kind of criticism in his introduction: "Bij Couperus kan men er dan niet omheen vrijwel ál zijn werk bij de biografie te betrekken" [When it comes to Couperus, no one should avoid taking almost *all* his works into account] (25). Now there is the more than one-thousand-page biography by Rémon van Gemeren. Van Gemeren comments on, analyzes, and puts Couperus's entire oeuvre into context within the whole of European culture. "Ik heb dit feuilleton minstens honderd keer gelezen" [I have read this text at least a hundred times] (185), van Gemeren writes after a quotation of over two pages. The reception of each of Couperus's books by literary critics is described neatly. Each school in literature or the arts is explained, and the author even investigates in which way every figure in Couperus's novels represents decadence, narcissism, and more. It is a relief that Couperus was appalled by expressionism and cubism, otherwise his biographer would have given an outline of these, too. In this biography Couperus is allowed to perform on a colossal stage; the problem is only that the scene is put in front instead of behind the main actor.

Outsiders' biographies are focused on the mentality of an era, whereas other biographies are primarily praising their hero and downplaying others. This is the case in Sylvester Hoogmoed's *De moeder van Ramses*, which adds depth to his 2012 biography of Dutch singer Ramses Shaffy (1933–2009), titled *Zien wel!: Het wonderlijke leven van Ramses Shaffy*. During his life, Shaffy always had the aura of being as free as a bird, hopping from one job, lover, or house to another. Shaffy's father was Egyptian, which he knew from his surname, but his mother was a complete mystery to him. Hoogmoed's latest biography is of Shaffy's mother, Alexandra Wysocka. It appears that Shaffy's life as *bohémien* was only surpassed by that of his mother, who, thinking she was the only heiress of the last Russian czar, always lived under the protection of important noblemen, ambassadors, and high-ranking politicians. Hoogmoed was given access to a suitcase with documents that contained the only reliable information on the fanciful life of Shaffy's mother. Still, in her biography it remains unclear who she actually was: a spy, a countess, or just a thief? In *De moeder van Ramses*, an outsider's history is told about someone who was an outsider even to people who thought they knew her best.

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Another example of a person who deliberately shaped his life narrative is the publisher Johan Polak (1928–1992). As recounted in Koen Hilberdink's biography, the young Polak hired a room above renowned publishing house Van Oorschot in central Amsterdam at the end of the 1940s. The ambitious tenant had inherited a lot of money from his family and, despite his age, was considered to be a connoisseur of J. H. Leopold, a poet whose work was only available in rare bibliophile editions. As an assistant to the famous but ailing professor P. N. van Eyck, Polak proposed to Van Oorschot an edition of Leopold's collected works. Van Oorschot accepted Polak's proposal, and the publication was funded by Polak himself. Polak's significance is difficult to overstate. With all his money and love for beautiful books, he played a major role as mediator of literature: he funded publications by De Beuk and diverse literary magazines, was one of the founders of the publishing house Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, and established the Athenaeum Bookshop. He was also a prolific collector of precious manuscripts and rare books. Hilberdink documents all these facets of Polak's life in his biography, which was published by Van Oorschot, but above all, he stresses Polak's remarkable personality.

Wim Sanders's biography of the Dutch author A. Moonen (1937–2007) is a portrait of an outsider par excellence, even an outcast. Moonen's novels are not very well known in Holland, probably because many critics and contemporary authors considered him to be too mad to be taken seriously. He was a writer's writer, writing about his sexual aberrations and his mental strains. But Sanders's recent biography, *Bel ik u wakker, beste man?*, shows that, in fact, Moonen was a tragic figure. He was acquainted with many people in Dutch literary society from the 1970s onward, but his chronic mental illnesses prevented people from becoming friends with him. The book is not only about Moonen, but also about the conditions that include or exclude a person from literary groups.

In the past year, biographies were also written about people who self-consciously profiled themselves as outsiders. Onno Blom published a one-thousand-two-hundred-page book on the author Jan Wolkers; Monica Soeting presented Cissy van Marxveldt, an author of books for girls, as being a feminist avant la lettre; and Eva Rovers wrote a biography of the tormented poet and television personality Boudewijn Büch, who cherished his exclusion from society to the extent that he even invented a rumor that he was a pedophile, a theme that he used in his poetry.

Although Frank Lodeizen (1939–2013) was a fairly successful artist known by a few collectors and fellow artists for his etchings and gouache drawings, he probably would not have had his own biography if he had had a different last name, which he shares with a young poet with a mythic reputation, Hans Lodeizen. In fact, Frank Lodeizen did not know of this famous poet

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he saw an obituary in which the death was announced of his twenty-ear-old grandnephew. Still, because of their shared name, Frank Lodei- gained friends in the literary society who assumed the two were close rela- s. Rineke van Houten's recently published biography on Frank Lodeizen ecuates this misunderstanding, which is troubled even more by how van uten does not cite the individual quotations in her book, though she does ter sources in the final pages. This lack of direct citations makes the reader der if van Houten's biography might not turn to fiction to describe Lo- en's life.

DUTCHMEN ABROAD

biography of Piet Mondrian that Hans Janssen published in 2016 was arkable, because Janssen stressed the spontaneous and outgoing charac- f this internationally renowned artist. Until now, Mondrian's neoplas- art of rigidly composed straight lines and symmetrical, colored fields thought to have been made by a neurotic hermit who would get nervous someone put a box of matches on his table the wrong way. Mondrian trimmed his moustache askew, thus making it look rectangular. Born mersfoort in 1872, Mondrian is now world famous, having turned the d upside down, especially with his painting *Victory Boogie Woogie*, which left unfinished when he died in New York in 1944. It is not very surpris- that a few biographies have been published about him. However, Janssen's proach to his subject diverges from his predecessors. Since he is curator of Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Janssen encounters Mondrian's master- es on a daily basis. That is why he can now speak of writing a "schilders- afie" [artist's biography] (13). In his introduction he promises to use the thod of a *vie romancée*: based upon documentation, his own experience of ewing Mondrian's art, and his strong writing skills, he occasionally takes liberty to "de grens naar het fictionele over te steken" [transgress borders the fictional world] (14) by daring to write this book from Mondrian's perspective. Janssen therefore writes Mondrian's life "op een manier die elijkenis met de roman opzoekt" [in a way that could resemble work- on a novel] (14). After reading such an introduction, readers might wor- bout the veracity of Janssen's biography, but, fortunately, fiction is only to make Mondrian's story more readable. Janssen simply could no longer d the image of Mondrian as a purist or hermit. Janssen also skirts details Mondrian's life, perhaps to make him more likeable. For example, where- nother biography, by Léon Hanssen, stresses Mondrian's anti-Semitism, sen does not discuss this at all. Janssen may justify this decision because perspective he takes in his text: Mondrian surely wouldn't call himself -Semitic.

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Another internationally renowned Dutchman gathered his thoughts mostly in Belgium, Spain, and Italy. Only by the very nature of his work as a pope, Adriaan Floriszoon Boeyens (1459–1523) was an outsider. Since the first century until now, there have been 308 popes, including the "antipopes" from Rome, Pisa, and Avignon, and only one of them came from the Netherlands. If you would put all biographies of popes together, you could build a cathedral from them, so it is still surprising that although he represented the Holy See for only one year, Adrianus VI, the name that Boeyens had given himself, continues to inspire biographers to write new books about him. The last one appeared in 2011, under the title of *De tragische paus uit de Nederlanden*. Now we have the theologian Twan Geurts's biography.

Politicians also tend to cultivate their role as outsiders. Populist politicians, no matter how long they have been active in politics, often despise politicians, a group they do not want to belong to. In this regard, the biography of Gijs van Hall is interesting, because this connected critic remained active in politics when his engagement with social problems was strongly criticized. Biographer Dirk Wolthekker makes use of the Van Hall family archive, which includes three hundred years and measures thirty-two meters wide. Coming from a family of bankers, professors, and ministers, van Hall had the right background to become mayor of Amsterdam. In his family, there was a *communis opinio* that law and order were self-legitimating. This perspective changed during the 1960s. Everything that was considered wrong in Dutch governmental policy was called *regentesk* or "bourgeois." The marriage of princess Beatrix and the German Claus von Amsberg, which took place in Amsterdam, triggered a riot by squatters, which was suppressed violently by the police. When this was all said and done, van Hall made an appearance on television, making clear that he no longer belonged to this new age.

Wolthekker's biography illustrates how members of the van Hall family maintained a certain consciousness of their place in history. Every piece of paper was kept, and verbal communication on a simple family reunion was neatly documented "voor het archief" [for the sake of the archive] (30). For example, in 1940, van Hall's father wrote a short letter on a lunch he wanted to organize for his wedding anniversary: "Ik wil deze uitnodiging schriftelijk herhalen om onder de familiepapieren te worden gerangschikt" [I want to repeat this invitation in writing, to be filed in the family papers] (30). The file on van Hall's work as a mayor in this archive will not be publically available until 2199. Nonetheless, it is telling that this aristocratic family gave the biographer permission to use it without restriction.

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Another example of how a politician cultivated his status as an outsider outlined in the biography of Jan Schaefer (1940–1994) by Louis Hoeks. Schaefer was a socialist, pastry chef, member of the Communist Party in Netherlands (CPN), member of parliament for the Labour Party (PvdA), secretary in the ministry of housing during the Den Uyl administration, and alderman in the Amsterdam municipal government. From Hoek's graphy, Schaefer appears to have been not only an authentic politician preferred to wear jeans and used slang instead of formal language), but could also be an intimidating one. In one of Hoek's countless interviews, haefer discussed his "losse-tegel-theorie" [loose paving stone theory]: he that people calling to complain about a paving cobble stone were bet- than theoreticians that could "urenlang lullen" [bullshit for hours on end] on socialist matters. But Schaefer did not refrain from threatening to ow such a stone through someone's window. During the squatters' actions he 1970s, he made an appeal on national radio to do so. As state secretary, called upon members of a neighborhood "te feliciteren" [to congratulate] a landlord—by throwing a stone through his window—if he was plan- to evict a poor elderly lady: "Zo'n buurt begrijpt dat 'feliciteren'" [Such eighborhood understands this "congratulation"] (92).

The biographer's autobiography can be regarded as a genre in itself. The st-known example is Richard Holmes's *Footsteps* (1985), in which he con- ed upon himself the major role in his search for traces of the lives of Rob- Louis Stevenson, Mary Wollstonecraft, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Gérard Nerval. Marja Pruis has written a book on her unsuccessful attempt to te a biography of the author Nettie Nijhoff-Wind and, recently, an autobi- aphy was published by James Atlas, biographer of Saul Bellow. Jan van der gt, biographer of the Dutch poets Hans Andreus, Adriaan Roland Holst, ndrik de Vries and Jan Elburg, now formulates his personal creed in a k with the appropriate title *Vierspan*, which means "four in hand." In this riguing book, van der Vegt tells how things were going behind the scenes ing the thirty years that he was working on his four biographies.

ious subjects of recent Dutch biographies can be regarded as "connected ics." They were perfectly able to criticize Dutch or foreign policymaking, often chose to do this from their perspectives as outsiders, without actu- engaging in it. Many of these biographies reveal the motivations for their ggles for acknowledgment. These motivations give a remarkable view of mentality of the age these subjects were living in.

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THE MEMORY OF PRIVATE AND FAMILY ARCHIVES
THE YEAR IN POLAND

PAWEŁ RODAK

TRANSLATED BY ALESSANDRO NICOLA MALUSÀ

the realm of Polish literature, autobiographical texts have been exception-
significant for many years. After 1989, following the democratic changes
occurred in Poland, a large number of memorial books (particularly re-
g to the period of the Second World War), as well as autobiographies, dia-
and correspondence collections have been published year after year. This
has been accompanied by the development of scholarship on autobiog-
y. The past year was no less plentiful than previous years. In this review,
draw attention to *Henryk* by Wojciech Karpiński and *Fałszerze pieprzu:*
ria rodzinna by Monika Sznajderman (both of which employ private and
ly archives in very interesting and important ways), as well as recent is-
of the journal *Autobiografia*.

Wojciech Karpiński's *Henryk* is in many respects a unique book. It is both
graphical and autobiographical work, as well as a recollective and diaristic
The author describes his contemporary Henryk Krzeczkowski (1921–
5), an eminent Polish essayist, translator, and editor, as well as an impor-
figure within the liberal-conservative Polish intelligentsia of the 1960s
1970s, and an authority for many younger individuals tied to this milieu.
piński relies on both personal memories and documents from Krzecz-
ski's private archives, including photographs and Krzeczkowski's diary.
uniqueness of this book comes from the fact that two editions of it ap-
ed in the span of a few months. Karpiński discovered fascinating new in-
ation about Krzeczkowski's life and immediately prepared a new edition
e book, expanding it with an additional chapter.

The first part of Wojciech Karpiński's book presents the figure and char-
of Henryk Krzeczkowski. The most important source for this account
e author's memory itself: Karpiński recalls evening and night discussions

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with Krzeczkowski at his apartment on Czackiego Street in Warsaw, near the University of Warsaw, where he would invite his interlocutors. As Karpiński writes, "Przychodziłem na rozmowy, zaintrygowany jego osobowością, ożywczą i pobudzającą" [I would come for discussions, intrigued by his invigorating and stimulating personality] (13). In reconstructing these conversations with Krzeczkowski, Karpiński assists his memory with imagination:

> Widzę go, jak siedzi w drewnianym fotelu, przy niskim fotelu, na którym było okrągłe florenckie skórzane pudełko na papierosy przywiezione kiedyś z Włoch, na tle biblioteki, gdzie były jego książki, jego płyty dobrane wedle własnych gustów i wedle nie całkiem świadomie przeczuwanych planów architekta, który przystępuje do budowy domu. To mnie fascynowało. (66)
>
> [I see him, sitting in a wooden chair, near a low armchair, on which lay a circular Florentine leather cigarette case brought at one time from Italy, against the backdrop of his library, which held all his books and his records, selected in accordance to his own tastes and according to the not quite consciously felt plans of an architect who proceeds to build a house. It fascinated me.]

The second and longest part of Karpiński's book is titled *Poszukiwania*, and takes the form of a diary. This section chronicles the writings of a nearly twenty-year-long work on a book on Krzeczkowski, which was likewise an investigation aimed at reconstructing his mysterious biography, which raised many questions. The first written record is dated May 1997 and the last January 2016. Step by step and year by year, Karpiński strives to unravel Krzeczkowski's enigmatic life. He employs most of all "wszelkie papiery, dokumenty, listy, zapiski, fotografie, które zostały po Henryku" [diverse papers, documents, letters, writings, and photographs that were left by Henryk] (50). Part of these materials were made available to him by a friend of Krzeczkowski. The rest were obtained by means of internet searches, as well as letters and phone calls with people worldwide who might have known Krzeczkowski or know something about him. Karpiński himself emphasizes that "dotarcie do dokumentów z nim związanych wymagało postawy detektywa, pomocy, wieloletniej, ludzi w Polsce, we Francji, w Austrii, Izraelu, w Niemczech, Szwecji, Stanach Zjednoczonych, nawet Australii" [accessing documents related to him required a detective's attitude, and the multiyear help of people from Poland, France, Austria, Israel, Germany, Sweden, the United States and even Australia] (105). Thereby, the author draws attention to the dynamic character of his book: it is neither an autobiography (for its main character is not the author) nor a biography (though it does recall the life of a historical figure). It is a book on the work toward a biography, on its writing, on how truth about someone's fate is sought and mediated by memory and archival traces.

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also a book that demonstrates that deciphering someone's biography is in a never-ending process. Indeed, right after the release of the first edition the book, Karpiński learned that during the Second World War Krzeczkowski married Irma Martens, the mother of Anna German, a famous postactor and singer. This marriage allowed German and her mother to leave Soviet Union for Poland, where their contact with Krzeczkowski would, ever, only be sporadic. This information disproves a previous theory that man's stepfather was killed in the battle of Lenino as a soldier of the Polrmy fighting alongside the Soviet army. In the second edition of *Henryk*, piński added, "Poszukiwań ciąg dalszy" [The search continues] (147–76), hich he explains why this erroneous information circulated for so long.

The third part of Karpiński's book, entitled *Autoportrety*, comprises fragts of the diary Krzeczkowski kept for most of his life, starting at age four. In it, Krzeczkowski writes about his "mitomania" [mythomania] (190), omosexuality, and the need to "zorganizowanie swej samotności" [organhis solitude] (194). He expresses that even in his diary, absolute sincerity possible, and that he still feels "za plecami obce oczy" [prying strangers' behind his shoulders] (186). This is not a diary in which life is the subject scription, but rather, as the diarist himself writes, "to raczej próba nadakiejś ciągłości i sensu mojemu życiu, wegetacji" [it is an attempt to give continuity and meaning to my life, my vegetation] (197). Krzeczkowsdiary is self-referential; it is in fact a diary about diary writing, or rather the impossibility of keeping one, the necessity of destroying it and ing again. Although only fragments of this diary have been printed, it is from these fragments that the text is not the most important aspect of diary, but rather that for Krzeczkowski keeping a diary is primarily a life ice that allows us to think, create, and exist on a daily basis, and, above continuously identify ourselves. The two diaries in Karpiński's book are in logue. They complement each other, the diary of the author himself and diary of the book's subject. Meanwhile, the book itself becomes a unique bination of autobiographical and biographical quests for the truth about Krzeczkowski really was.

The second book that I wish to draw attention to is Monika Sznajderis *Fałszerze pieprzu: Historia rodzinna*. Sznajderman is an anthropologist for over twenty years the head of Wydawnictwo Czarne, currently one of and's most important publishers, particularly in the field of nonfiction. As e case of Karpiński's project, Sznajderman's book is likewise a reconstruc- of the past, though it differs in that it is not based on personal memory e memory of others, but rather it relies on extant documents, particularly iving photographs. This book, however, unlike Karpiński's, is not a recontion of one figure's life, but of *historia rodzinna* (family history), that is onstruction of the interwoven fates of many people from both sides of

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the author's family. Sznajderman's father comes from a Jewish family that has long lived in Poland, while her mother originates from a noble Polish family. This "family history" thus has two separate themes, and the two families' mutual interlacement—the marriage of the author's parents—only appears on the book's last page.

Sznajderman's book is not just a book on *pamięć* (memory), although this word frequently appears throughout the text. At a certain moment, referring to the Hebrew verb *zachor*, expressing the obligation to remember and convey memory to future generations, she even writes that there is "nigdy więc dosyć pamięci" [never enough memory] (114). It is also, and perhaps even above all, a book about silence and oblivion. That is why, in reminiscing about the fates of both sides of her family, Jewish and Polish, much more attention is devoted to her Jewish side, which was almost completely forgotten—forgotten by the Poles living in cities and towns in which thousands of Jewish families once lived, forgotten also by the few Jews who survived and did not want to convey their own traumatic experiences to their children, as was the case of the author's father:

> Ta książka powstała z jego milczenia. Mój ojciec należy do tych, którzy milczą. To milczenie jest ogromne, przepastne i można się w nim utopić. Dlatego zaczęłam pamiętać. Przeciw temu milczeniu, przeciw zapomnieniu, przeciw nicości, która chciałaby to wszystko pochłonąć. (113)
>
> [This book arose from his silence. My father belongs to those who remain silent. This silence is immense, so precipitous that one can drown in it. So I began to remember. Against this silence, against oblivion, against nihility, which wishes to absorb it all.]

The places where they lived and the documents that survived them—it is primarily these two types of traces that serve the author to reconstruct the fate of her Jewish family. Sznajderman traveled to places her Jewish grandparents had been connected to before the war, but she finds no evidence of her Jewish family's presence. Instead, she sees places overgrown with "zielsko zapomnienia" [greeneries of oblivion] (19), experiencing the "pustka" [emptiness] (109) after a world which has irretrievably disappeared and which may only return as a consciousness of the "nieobecna obecność" [absent presence] (109) of those who once lived there.

Documents, letters, and photographs of the author's Jewish family proved crucial in the mnemonic restoration of this lost world. Sent before the war over the ocean by Grandma Amelia, they returned to Poland from the US seventy years later and now comprise a "symboliczna opowieść o życiu w świecie przedholocaustowym" [symbolic story of life in a pre-Holocaust world] (26).

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otographs play a very important role in this book. They are not illustrations the narrated story, but rather are sources. The combination of text and vi- material is one of this book's most important features. Photographs, as ajderman writes, referring to Susan Sontag, supply "dowody rzeczowe, walające wierzyć, że istnieli" [material evidence that allows the viewer to ieve that they existed] (52). Photographs activate memory, which in this e is also the work of imagination, which is why, in this book, terms such as *ę* (I see), *zgaduję* (I guess), and *próbuję sobie wyobrazić* (I try to imagine) ur very often. Beginning with photographs, the author describes what the of her grandmother Amelia's family could have been like. Her mother ran elegant guesthouse in Miedzeszyn, where her father had his medical prac- The author likewise recreates the genealogy of her grandfather Ignacy m Radom, who came from a family of tailors. Both of the author's Jew- grandparents and her great uncle died during the war. The only survivor the author's father, who, after passing through Majdanek and Auschwitz, nt—after the war—a couple of years in a home for Jewish children in Zatrzebie later graduated from secondary school and became a doctor.

Sznajderman's sense of self is also closely related to her connection to her ndmother Maria, who, after the war, lived with the author's parents in rsaw. Maria came from a Polish landowning family, whose center of life their manor house in Ciechanki Łańcuchowskie. Their life comprised the typical activities of the landed gentry: hunting, banqueting, and du- g, although—at the same time—Maria's father was also an industrialist entrepreneur of interwar Poland, living in cities like Łódź and Warsaw. story of the grandmother's landed family contrasts dramatically with that he authors' Jewish ancestors. The strongest expression of this disparity is nd in a citation of words uttered by the grandmother's brother, "Myśmy owali się wszyscy, oni wszyscy zginęli" [We all survived, they all perished] 5). Sznajderman describes the lives of her Polish ancestors with specific at- tion to their attitudes—and the general attitudes of Poles—toward Jewish iety. In the diaries of her Polish family members, she discerns both indif- nce toward Jews, as well as expressions of sympathy for specific individu- in the Jewish community who were known and respected. She notices nifestations of anti-Semitism within the national press that the family read in the program of the National Party, with which they sympathized. She ntuates the wartime indifference of large parts of Polish society toward terrible fate of Jews, while also finding traces of genuine compassion in diaries of her mother's brother. She recalls the postwar resettling of Jew- housing and the appropriation of Jewish property by Poles, as well as the nifestations of aggression toward Jews.

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These accounts are accompanied by recurring questions within the book, namely how could there be indifference toward the fate of a society with which one neighbored, and "czy obojętność może być niewinna?" [can indifference be innocent?] (231). The answer to the first question is a statement in the book that, despite neighborly relations, Polish soil was "zamieszkana przez dwa osobne, odrębne, nieznające się narody. Nieznające i niepragnące się poznać. Od wieków losy polski i żydowski toczyły swe wody oddalonymi od siebie korytami. 'Nie było wspólnoty losu i nie ma wspólnej pamięci'" [inhabited by two separate, distinct, unfamiliar nations. Unfamiliar and unwilling to familiarize. For centuries the fates of Poles and Jews ran in the waters of separate streams. 'There was no communal fate nor common memory'] (216). The answer to the second question is the sense of "utraty niewinności" [loss of innocence] (213), the conviction that responsibility for the fate of her Jewish ancestors should extend to her Polish relatives and herself.

Sznajderman's book is one of a series of similarly important autobiographical books that have appeared in Poland in recent years and have also been written by women, where the reconstruction of family history is conducted in the context of identifying one's own identity via a return to one's Jewish roots. However, Sznajderman's book is also unique. Her text contains a narrative about the end of not one but two worlds that occurred in Poland during the war and right after it, as seen through the perspective of the author's family history: namely the end of the Jewish world and the end of the landowning world. Sznajderman is well aware of the differences between these kinds of endings, and she does not try to blur them. Her family genealogy makes her feel like a "świadek podwójnego końca świata" [witness of a double world's end] (235). She calls herself a "świadek podwójnego końca świata. Świadkiem Zagłady i zagłady. Z perspektywy historyka oba te słowa oznaczają kres, jak jednak porównać ich ciężar?" [witness of Extermination and extermination. From a historian's perspective both these words denote an end, yet how can we compare their burden?] (235).

The third publication that I would like to draw attention to is the journal *Autobiografia*, published in Poland since 2013, edited by researchers from the University of Szczecin, and with editors in chief Inga Iwasiów and Jerzy Madejski. The journal is interested in both today's form of "classic" autobiographical genres, such as diaries, memoirs, or autobiographies, and the latest practices in the digital world, including emails, blogs, Facebook profiles, and private and family websites. Articles concerning autobiographies of women "przedstawiających stan genderowej teorii autobiografizmu" [presenting the state of gendered autobiographical theory] are often represented within the journal. Inga Iwasiów writes in one of the issue's introductions that "badane narzędziami genderowymi autobiografie okazują się tyleż zapisem różnego doświadczenia kobiet i mężczyzn, ile performatywami płci i aktami

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rwencji, alternatywnymi scenariuszami życia" [gender-based autobiogra-
es are as much a record of the differing experiences of women and men, as
as performatives of gender, intervention acts, and alternative scenarios of
(10). The journal's editor thus draws attention to the emancipatory and,
ome extent, therapeutic nature of women's autobiographies. The journal
wise devotes considerable space to autobiographies of men and the cat-
y of masculinity in general in relation to autobiographies in Poland. In
introduction to the sixth issue, Maciej Duda even calls for the necessity of
kalna lektura" [local readings] of categories of masculinity that "używały i
wają Polki i Polacy" [Polish men and women used and use] (8). *Autobio-*
a also devotes much of its scope to spatial autobiographical experiences,
ely relationships between writing about oneself and between the place
re one lives and writes. Madejski emphasizes in the journal's first issue the
mise of "tropić to, jak na ziemiach zachodnich piśmiennictwo autobio-
czne utrwala doświadczenia: migracji, wygnania, emigracji, przesiedle-
wydziedziczenia, uchodźctwa, zakorzenienia" [tracking the way autobio-
hical writings on Western soil perpetuates the experience of migration,
, emigration, resettlement, dispossession, refugeeism, and rooting] (10).
The seventh issue of *Autobiografia* addresses the state of autobiographical
tices in Poland, both in historical and contemporary circumstances. In
article "Niechęć do wyznawania," Artur Hellich formulates a strong ar-
ent that, up until the end of the twentieth century, the autobiographical
autoanalizy" [act of self-analysis] was "marginalizowany" [marginalized]
oland (20), and its place was occupied by memoir forms in which the
vidual described the events in which he took part, instead of describing
self. The author relates this to "społecznikowskie i narodowowyzwoleńcze
ały polskiej inteligencji" [social activism and national independence ideals
he Polish intelligentsia] as well as the "kolektywistyczno-tradycjonalistycz-
model kultury wiejskiej" [collectivist-traditionalist model of rural culture]
). On the other hand, in the issue's concluding article, Sławomir Iwasiów
es about the ubiquitous phenomenon of "cybernarcyzm" [cyber narcis-
m] (187) within (as well as outside) the realm of the Polish internet. Cyber
rcissism, that is the constant need to present oneself on social media, is, ac-
ding to Iwasiów, replacing the traditional, written autobiographical prac-
s more and more. In the latter, writing about oneself would always entail
cognition of one's own identity. Now the identity begins to "rozpływać
w zmultiplikowanych obrazach samego siebie" [dissolve in multiplied im-
s of oneself] (197). Thus, private archives lose their materiality and mem-
changes its form. In a hundred years, books such as those of Wojciech
piński and Monika Sznajderman may no longer be possible.

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EXEMPLARY LIVES, CONTEMPORARY LIVES
THE YEAR IN ROMANIA

IOANA LUCA

A LOOK INTO THE PAST

e variety of life writing available on the Romanian book market remains dazzling this year as it has been throughout the last three decades. Pub-ing houses with a long tradition in life writing series have expanded their folios with new, exciting autobiographies, biographies, journals, diaries, espondence, and book-length interviews. For instance, the documenting he lives of dissidents abroad and interwar intellectuals has been enriched he publication of the correspondence and diaries of their family members. cerina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu's letters to her daughter, *Scrisori către Monica 51–1958*, further the long-lasting attention publishers have given to Monica inescu, the foremost intellectual and anti-communist voice in Paris. Mon-Lovinescu's several volumes of journals and autobiographical essays, which e been available in bookstores since the 1990s, are now complemented her mother's daily letters and postcards from Bucharest. Written between 7 and 1958, some of the most difficult communist years in Romania, this espondence captures a mother's love and desperate attempt to be in con-t communication with her child, whom she feared she might never see in. The letters (most of them translated from French and sent abroad only h much difficulty) are documents of Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu's daily depriva-s, suffering, and resistance to the blackmail and assiduous efforts of the uritate (the secret police) to force her daughter to collaborate. The author jailed in 1958, and this, once she had been denied vital medication, led to death in communist prison.

Cornelia Blaga-Brediceanu's excerpts from her diaries—*Jurnale 1919, 36–1939, 1939–1940, 1959–1960*—testify to the same interest in docu-nting representative lives, this time of the interwar poet and philosopher

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Lucian Blaga. Blaga's daughter's memoir, *Tatăl meu*, appeared in 2012, and in 2016 excerpts of his wife's diary (curated by their daughter) reached the public in a revised edition, revealing Blaga-Brediceanu's love of, dedication to, and influence on the great poet's career, as well as bitter interwar intellectual feuds between landmark cultural personalities.

Începuturile unui exil îndelungat, 1940–1954 is the first volume in the diary of Ion Rațiu, who was a counselor at the Romanian legation in London under King Carol II; a very active emigré leader, politician, and businessman after 1945; and a vice president of the Christian Democratic-National Peasant Party as well as its presidential candidate in the first post-1989 elections. The impressive 665-page text presents Rațiu's early years in London, offers a panorama of the Romanian exile at the time, and features this distinguished gentleman of 1990s local politics—known to the public for his British accent, antiquated language, and bow tie—as an ambitious young man who attempts to put into practice, à la Benjamin Franklin, a great deal from the countless books he consumes voraciously and who constantly seeks ways to help his country.

Life narratives by or about members of Romania's royal house have also been a constant presence on the book market since the early 1990s. From 2016 to 2017, three significant royalty-related texts were published: the exile journal of Queen Marie of Romania, *Țara pe care o iubesc* (a sequel to the three previously published WWI diaries), in which she professes her love for her country and describes her suffering over its fate; *Mihai I, ultimul rege al românilor*, Tatiana Bran Niculescu's biography of King Michael, Marie's grandson, which was penned by a successful writer and former senior editor for the Bucharest bureau of the BBC; and the exile correspondence of Carol I's mistress, *Duduia: Scrisori din exil ale Elenei Lupescu*, edited by Diana Mandache. The 2016 exhibition *Fragmente de memorie: Portrete Regale* at Muzeul Național de Artă al României, the national art museum that also featured large photographic portraits attached to the fence of the museum in an attempt to familiarize the larger public with the royal family, can be considered a part of this ongoing endeavor to bring to light unknown or suppressed segments of Romania's history via an array of life narratives.

CONTEMPORARY LIVES

Recuperating the diaspora is another long-term project of Romanian publishers, and its main focus seems to have gradually switched to more recent or contemporary figures. In this sense, 2016 has made available Riri Sylvia Manor's autobiographical reminiscences *Bucuria de a nu fi perfectă*. The text recounts the author's life trajectory—how her family survived Nazi

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portation, endured anti-Semitism and the early communist years under Georghiu-Dej, and left for Israel in the 1960s, and how, once there, she built herself a stellar career as a renowned international ophthalmologist. A passionate writer, Manor recounts how in the 1950s she chose to study medicine rather than humanities in Bucharest and therefore to be less exposed to the cult of personality and the Marxist-Leninist indoctrination of the time. In the early 1990s, right after some "events" (10) happened (i.e. the Romanian 1989 anti-communist revolution) she returns as a tourist to visit her childhood places and "confront" her memories (8) only to become an ardent supporter of her former country and get involved in countless medical collaborations and projects. The initial encounter with fellow doctors in Bucharest's Spitalul Clinic de Oftalmologie prompts the established specialist to return regularly for medical exchanges, also leading to increased literary collaboration as well as to her resuming, after a forty-year-long break, her career as a Romanian-language poet and writer.

Another notable diasporic text that emerged in 2016 is *Eu, Dracula și John Lennon*, the autobiographical volume of the acclaimed Romania-born German fiction writer and playwright Jan Cornelius. Published first in German and then translated into Romanian by the writer himself, "the stories of somebody who lived in and was a dazed observer of communist Romania and the amazing West" (the book subtitle) are funny, witty, and well written. Just as the title itself—which translates to "I, Dracula and John Lennon"—might indicate, the text meanders through mazes of the autobiographical self while busting myths about both his home and his host country. The numerous self-standing stories successfully juxtapose communist realities with life in the "West," just as they nicely traverse past and present, and Romania and Germany. With the knack of a gifted writer, Cornelius constructs humorous scenes as well as melancholy tableaux, which both explain and translate to the intended readership (the book is clearly addressed to the German public and the younger Romanian generations) his first twenty-seven years in Banat, his departure to Germany, and his numerous trips back and forth ever since. The autobiographical account enters into intertextual dialogue with Richard Bautigan's *Sombrero Fallout*, and its author makes the best of unfortunate incidents in his life in both countries. Full of irony and apparent detachment, the book is no exhaustive personal narrative but rather a series of individual episodes that bring to light topics and experiences as varied as his childhood dreams, how important John Lennon was for him when he was in high school, the time his father repaired the electricity for the neighborhood, his skill as a private tutor to a communist big shot's son, the story of how he got rid of the much-longed-for passport that enabled him to escape "prospects

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of a pitch-black future" (36), his encounters with fellow Romanians while working as a translator for the German police, his (dis)identification with Dracula, and many others. Jan Cornelius's autobiographical reminiscences straddle times, languages, and countries with lots of humor, irony, and self-deprecation, bringing back a gifted diasporic writer to Romanian letters.

The ongoing publication of Matei Călinescu's works provides an exciting and rewarding opportunity for a literary scholar to enjoy *Spre România*, a short but very dense volume replete with critical insight. The journal traces the author's visit to his home country and dedicates an almost equal amount to the two words of the original title, *Spre România*: the main focus of the current journal, Romania, reveals itself in the final part, after *spre* (a journey toward) that involves traveling to Greece in 2000 and making an incursion into numerous literary texts through which Călinescu reads himself and his experiences (Saul Bellow's *Ravelstein*, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and associated Greek mythology, and Adelbert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl*, among others). This journal shares numerous features with the previously published autobiographical volumes, including *Un fel de journal* and *Un alfel de jurnal*—an interest in the Romanian cultural life and intellectual history, the inclusion of musings on the author's academic work, a penchant for literary criticism and self-reflexivity, as well as a well-crafted structure.

Different from Călinescu's previous volumes is the in-depth and extended focus on self-analysis. Driven by intellectual ruminations and literary exegesis, *Spre România* is a travelogue imbued with dense self-reading and self-exploration, which facilitate the journey into the writer's inner labyrinth. For Călinescu, physical journeys become a springboard for meditations investigating the main threads of the critic's academic work on modernity, Romanian identity and interwar intellectuals, and the aesthetics of kitsch, and also for a dazzling array of ruminations about music, painting, aging, or Romanian exilic identity. Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada*, William Blake's poetry, and Nicolae Steinhardt's reading of Ion Luca Caragiale are just as much present in the journal as his teaching in Cluj, his encounters with friends, and life in Romania at large in 2002. While Călinescu's Athens visits or misadventures always take Romania as a point of comparison, experiences in and perspectives from his native country further his efforts to sketch an endearing, but by no means celebratory, portrayal of Romania. Unlike in the previous volumes, depictions crystalize now into aphoristic wisdom: Romania represents "normality as utopia" (134) and even "a dear absurdity" (143), about which he has "the nostalgia of nostalgia" (143). Moreover, as a small compendium of exegesis, the book is a feast for the literary scholar, and hopefully it will find its way into English to stand next to Călinescu's academic work published in the US.

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EXEMPLARY LIVES

e year 2016 stands out through two bestsellers that have made headlines
side literary and cultural magazines, arts columns in mainstream newspa-
s, and cultural shows on TV: *Flash-uri din sens opus* by Marian Godină, a
ce officer, and *Am ales România* by Clotilde Armand, a French engineer
o ran for mayor in one of Bucharest's districts in the 2016 elections.
The "flashes" of Godină's title can refer to both the police car on a mis-
and the flashes of life the book presents. The officer from Braşov, a beau-
l city in Transylvania, first recounts humorous stories about his youth,
entrance exam to the police academy (which he claims he passed due to
orn qualities rather than hard work), and life as a police cadet, to then
s on significant episodes in his professional life. Hilarious anecdotes—
e of which were initially Facebook posts that went viral and elicited witty
ments that sometimes also find their way into the published text—about
nkards, the nouveaux riches, truck drivers, priests, prostitutes, cuckold-
husbands, arrogant and corrupt superiors, and absurd police decisions—
und and offer the reader a large tapestry of contemporary life. Such fun-
stories alternate with didactic ones, which teach us how to avoid getting
cket or how to correctly cross the street. An exemplary self-made man,
dină consistently follows the law and becomes an unwilling hero by speak-
up or refusing to succumb to pressures from his superiors. *Flash-uri* goes
inst the decade-old Romanian tradition of poking fun at the stupidity of
old communist police (Miliția), to which Godină, the gifted storyteller,
h a great sense of humor, much irony, and a keen eye for typologies and
k realism, often relates amusingly. By not engaging on a crusade against
d cops" or serving up stereotypes, Godină also manages to offer an uplift-
and celebratory view of what it means to be a policeman, humanizing the
ent image of this Romanian institution by insisting on uprightness, au-
nticity, and professionalism.
Armand's story of "choosing Romania" contradicts trends in Romania's
ent life writing scene and Romanian letters in general. Reversing a long
dition of Romanian writers' leaving for Paris and publishing in French, this
nch-born author instead settles in Bucharest, professes an unadulterated
e for her adopted country, and writes in Romanian. Moreover, her reverse
jectory comes at a moment when immigration is a much-debated mass
enomenon, and thus the story of her life acquires an exemplary and excep-
nal dimension. Schooled at MIT, married to a Romanian mathematician,
d a mother of six, Armand provides glimpses into her life that are unknown
the public. She reminisces about the moment she fell in love with Roma-
, motherhood, the pain of losing two children, family life in Bucharest and

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several European cities where her husband held research positions, the Romanian and French educational systems, as well as her work challenges and achievements. In the attempt "to make her life transparent" (7), she writes candidly about the beauty of her adopted country and its people, about "contents without form" (the delicious dinners without any festivity or good wine in plastic bottles, very unlike *à la française*) (26), as well as corruption and frozen mentalities. There is a constant celebration of Romanianness past and present, and Armand feels "on a mission" to give Romanians confidence, "to quell their suffering," and make them "see their lives in a beautiful light" (200–01).

Armand's Romanian patriotism, as well as her optimism about and faith in her adopted country, are quite remarkable. The book was a definite hit with a public in search of a much-needed positive mirror, a renewed sense of national identity as an antidote to visions about the country's "unfortunate history" and long-term "national suffering" (164), and confidence that a better future is possible and foreseeable. Still, the text often sounds a note too cheerful and at moments quite naive; on the other hand, it remains a catchy read, due to the author's professed "authenticity," "sincerity," "genuineness," "transparency" (5–8), and lengthy explanations about her life choices.

While apparently very different, the two volumes and their authors have many things in common. For instance, both life stories emerged on online platforms (Facebook postings and a personal blog, respectively); consequently, even before the texts were published, their authors were both familiar to and highly popular with the public due to their numerous online comments recounting attempts to fight entrenched mentalities and corruption or simply not to comply with the systems they belonged to. Their pictures on their respective books' covers contribute, of course, to their "recognizability" and further enforce Philippe Lejeune's autobiographical pact. The authors are also very similar in the missionary-like attitude they assume. Where Godină wants to change the face of the police, which is perceived as being mired in corruption scandals, inefficient, and chronically lacking interest in the regular citizen while always eager to pay lip service to whomever happens to be higher up in the political or financial echelon, Armand, besides attempting to bring some fresh air to Romanian politics, strives to persuade her public about the need to celebrate Romanian national identity and boost the nation's self-confidence.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the then-prime minister attended the book launch of Godină's *Flash-uri*. He strongly endorsed the author's civic attitude and emphasized the lesson "the Godină phenomenon" offers to the public and also how such examples make the Romanian society "healthier" (Pop and

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cea). Apart from Godină's civic virtues, it is quite clear that his robust e of humor, bawdry, and continued Facebook presence have added to the odible and immediate success of his narrative: this short, entertaining, nstructive collection of flashes sold twenty thousand copies in the first weeks it could be preordered online.

Clotilde Armand's self-fashioning story also benefited from wide exposure an impressive readership: it was the highlight of the electoral campaign e seat of Bucharest's first district mayor and increased the notoriety of ly formed party, Save Romania Union (USR), in its attempt to enter ament. While she did not win the mayoral seat, Armand did win the cal support and appreciation of many people, literary critics included. of them, in fact, after reviewing her book, envisioned her as a candidate ould support in the 2019 presidential elections (Mihăilescu, "Cartea"). this point of view, Romania joins once again cultures where life writ- eets politics and the text is certainly employed by its author as a means vancing a set of civic and (idealistic) political values. The reception of nd's *Am ales* proves, however, that the book is read (even by literary crit- or the facticity of the life described and the personality features of the ter portrayed, rather than with an eye to the self-fashioning involved in life writing acts or the implications of this phenomenon.

he outpouring of memoirs and journals in the 1990s was seen as re- g the "hunger for model biographies, the hunger for [learning about] or fulfilled destinies" (Mihăilescu, *Literatura* 10–11) the public ex- ced in the aftermath of communism. Almost three decades later, the t success of Godină's and Armand's books proves the need for success- e stories that can be emulated and also for contemporary heroes who corruption, oppose the system, and bring hope and possibly change. th cases, life writing functions as a site of struggle and resistance, and and political reforms are championed successfully through it: two in- uals record their life experience, attempt to trigger change, and be- a tremendous public success. The publishing of their personal stories d Godină and Armand not only into embodiments of civic and politi- rtues but also into local celebrities: Godină's second book, addressed ildren, has already come out, while Armand continues to be in the ght. At the same time, such life stories and their reception offer good hts into the current Romanian context: on the one hand, the life tra- ies they capture are exceptional rather than everyday, and this makes into admirable but idealistic examples; on the other hand, their very ss highlights the dire lack of direction in Romanian society, the shal- ss of its system and the ongoing need for reform.

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The titles mentioned above and the ones I had to leave out in this overview point to the general effervescence and dynamism of present-day Romanian life writing, which continues to enjoy a steady readership. Diaries and journals of well-known personalities remain attractive to the public, just as the backward gaze has not lost its appeal, as testified by the numerous exciting titles that come out yearly. The 2016–2017 releases also suggest the possibility that contemporary lives might soon edge out the model destinies of interwar years as well as the multiple biographies of suffering in communist prisons or dissidence at large. In spite of the traditional reluctance readers have felt about the autobiographical story that does not recount the life of "the old and famous," both writers and publishers are increasingly aware of the untapped potential of a much broader range of personal stories and have been steadily bringing them to the public even when their writers are first-time authors. The changing of generations (and implicitly of audiences) most likely plays a role in this, as the thirst for past models gives way to the need for possible contemporary ones, and the interest in finding out about the censored times is gradually balanced by the desire to see current problems or one's unrecorded history addressed in relevant texts. At the same time, some of the bestselling titles of the past year tell a cautionary tale about Romania's present: real civic and political virtues are exceptional examples, and optimism about and confidence in the country's systems have to be constantly earned through struggle and effort.

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PUBLICIZING PRIVATE LIVES IN A RAINBOW NATION
THE YEAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

NICK MDIKA TEMBO

speech during the apartheid era was not possible, especially for blacks. eelika Jayawardane noted in her 2013 *Symposium Magazine* article, ti- Memoirs Take a Daring Turn in South Africa," that until recently the heid state was obsessed with controlling the national narrative, as well e stories people told, believed, and internalized about themselves and s. It imposed that control using surveillance, legislation, state-mandated ace, and community policing. But since the fall of apartheid in 1994, orld has witnessed a deluge of life writing—biography, autobiography, oir, and testimony—from South Africa. My review will be limited to a fraction of these works, specifically those that have appeared in Engrom mid-2016 to September 2017. Some of the notable publications that appeared during this period are works by Glynnis Breytenbach (*Rule of* David Coplan and Oscar Gutierrez (*Last Night at the Bassline*), Piers kshanks (*Confluence*), John Fredericks (*Skollie*), Rafique Gangat (*Bend- e Rules*), Thandeka Gqubule (*No Longer Whispering to Power*), Bridget n-Barber (*Student Comrade Prisoner Spy*), Daryl Ilbury (*Tim Noakes*), d Kathrada and Sahm Venter (*Conversations with a Gentle Soul*), Man- Mathembu (*The Backroom Boy*), Herman Mashaba and Isabella Morris e Like You*), Fatima Meer (*Fatima Meer*), Sibusiso Mjikeliso (*Being a Springbok*), Bongani Ngqulunga (*The Man Who Founded the ANC*), e Nicolson (*An A to Z of Amazing South African Women*), Malebo Se- (*Miss Behave*), Lesley Smailes (*Cult Sister*), Karina Szczurek (*The Fifth Brink*), Lindiwe Hani and Melinda Ferguson (*Being Chris Hani's Daugh- ecovered drug addict Grizelda Grootboom (*Exit*), talk-show host Trevor (*Born a Crime*), fashion and media maven, and TV and radio presenter ng Matheba (*From A to B*), and the indefatigable journalist and politi- Helen Zille (*Not Without a Fight*).

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A potpourri of themes inform this extensive collection, ranging from speaking truth to power (Gqubule); politics (Ngqulunga, Hani, and Zille); activism (Sephodi); crime, violence, and poverty (Fredericks and Noah); lack of belonging (Noah and Grootboom); entrepreneurship (Mashaba and Matheba); drug and substance (ab)use (Noah, Grootboom, and Hani); rape and sexual exploitation (Grootboom, Sephodi, and Smailes); sports and entertainment (Cruickshanks, Coplan and Gutierrez, and Mjikeliso); and resisting apartheid and its divisive laws (Hilton-Barber, Meer, and Noah).

From this impressive body of life writing, I have singled out three texts for discussion: Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime and Other Stories* (2016), Malebo Sephodi's *Miss Behave* (2017), and Grizelda Grootboom's *Exit: A True Story* (2017). While there is a curious connective thread that cuts across the selected works—the challenges youth face in post-apartheid South Africa—I will explore how the selected authors reconstruct the rainbow nation, which, as Jayawardane claims, is "still obsessed in many ways with using racial classification to structure individual and group identity."

TREVOR NOAH, *BORN A CRIME*

Although Noah's *Born a Crime* aims at comic relief, it is through this narrative style that one gets to appreciate the seriousness of the issues he relentlessly interrogates: the plight of being biracial in (post-)apartheid South Africa. Noah opens his narrative with the contrite voice of someone who considers his birth a mishap. The "sin" his parents—a black Xhosa mother and a white Swiss father—committed was that the two of them agreed to give birth to him in a country that criminalized sex across the races. "It was illegal to be mixed (to have a black parent and a white parent)," observes Noah (34). "The government went to insane lengths to try and enforce these new laws. The penalty for breaking them was five years in prison" (26). Noah, thus, is the crime born out of his parents' coital arrangement, which leads to feelings of unbelonging in him: "my birth certificate doesn't say that I'm Xhosa, which technically I am. And it doesn't say that I'm Swiss, which the government wouldn't allow" (32). The anxiety of being neither black nor white soon begins to take its toll on him. During his childhood, he couldn't freely walk with his mother, for "a light-skinned child with a black woman would raise too many questions" (33). But then, he couldn't associate with his father, either, who would walk "a bit away from" him and, whenever young Noah got closer, the older man would panic and run away so that he was not seen associating with his biracial son (33). Again and again, Noah felt that he was the "unwanted" one in his society. He tells of an incident in which, for example, his mother invited a woman named Queen, who under the apartheid regime was classified as "colored," to go out with them just so he belongs: "Queen

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d walk next to me and act like she was my mother, and my mother would a few steps behind, like she was the maid working for the coloured wom-34). Much of Noah's experiences at school follow a similar trajectory. He outsider" to his schoolmates, who would not admit him into their social s because he "belonged to no [classificatory] group" (163). Noah thus ides that he was "the anomaly" wherever he and his mother lived (137), g, "So you can imagine how weird it was for me. I was mixed but not ed—coloured by complexion but not by culture. Because of that I was as a coloured person who didn't want to be coloured" (141).

oah uses these experiences as an entry point to describing how he dis-ed a new way of negotiating his identity among his peers and the wider , national, and international) community: telling jokes and being poly-As he states:

> u don't ask yourself to be accepted for everything you are, just the one part that u are willing to share. For me it was humour. I learned that even though I didn't long to one group, I could be part of any group that was laughing. I'd drop in, ss out the snacks, tell a few jokes. I'd perform for them. I'd catch a bit of their nversation, learn more about their group, and then leave. I never overstayed my lcome. . . . I was everywhere with everybody, and at the same time I was all by rself. (164)

is good at making serious issues seem light through the humorous er in which he narrates his experiences, including an incident in which other throws him out of a speeding taxi when an enraged Zulu taxi threatens to kill them. He also introduces us to the world of crime he ced during his teenage years: "It's easy to be judgemental about crime you live in a world wealthy enough to be removed from it," he says. en, the gang he joins to survive on the streets of Johannesburg "taught that everyone has different notions of right and wrong, different defi-s of what constitutes crime, and what level of crime they're willing to ipate in" (249). American philanthropic billionaire Bill Gates has called s story of growing up "tragic" because, for him, Noah's "family is des-ly poor. He's arrested. And in the most shocking moment, his mother t by his stepfather. Yet in Noah's hands, these moving stories are told ay that will often leave you laughing." I cannot agree with Gates more.

ALEBO SEPHODI, *MISS BEHAVE*

ough not a memoir or autobiography, I made [this book] personal be-I believe there is much power in being open and honest about our lives" rites activist Malebo Sephodi in what reads like a preface to her epony-text *Miss Behave*. Yet the story she shares with the reader is all about her

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experiences as she was growing up well into adulthood. It is her life story. Like most peoples' lives all over the world, hers is colored by many grim incidents. These experiences are harrowing at times but also down to earth. They infect and affect us with their wit, candidness, and their description of humankind's determination to live in the face of the social problems that sometimes beset our lives. As noted, Sephodi's text is written from an activist's point of view, exploring the kinds of challenges a black woman faces when she decides to live her own life and become who she wants to be. This, then, is "herstory" told by someone who wants to stake her claim in a patriarchal society. Sephodi's account includes how, with the help of her mother, who taught her "never to relent" and "to always seek the truth and walk in [her] power" (11), she unlearned patriarchal systems and practices that passed as a "culture" that thwarts the free potential and advancement of women. Growing up, she had to resist so many patriarchal norms and expectations, oftentimes falling out with those who were stuck in a cultural rut. Sephodi warns:

> It is traumatic to find out that so much of what you have been taught to believe and stand for is actually used to control you. Fear can be a tool to keep people trapped. We frequently accept norms in the name of culture and beliefs. All of these must be interrogated. We must decide how to analyse all that we have been force-fed. Some things we need to vomit out of our systems so that the truth may prevail. (14)

Such a stand has its own challenges because, as Bonang Matheba observes in an equally powerful statement about the precarious position facing women who are construed as social deviants. Matheba echoes,

> Society isn't very kind to women in general, but especially if you don't "behave" in the way society wants you to, if you are a woman who refuses to be limited and boxed, like women who own their beauty and sexuality, women who demand equal rights and refuse to tolerate the various kinds of bullshit women must endure every day. (128)

Sephodi and Matheba speak to this warped reasoning, advising that women must always be vigilant if they want to rise above their subjugation to patriarchal roles and be the people they want to be. "I refuse to behave. I am standing up for a just and liberated society where I am a human being and not an entity that belongs to anybody, and if that is misbehaving, then that's what I'm here for," Sephodi states emphatically (30). And, as if to concur with Sephodi, Matheba, in her own memoir, proclaims, "The most powerful and confusing thing a woman can be is a whole person and unashamed of it" (138), which is what both Sephodi and Matheba become by the time they finish narrating their stories.

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Miss Behave must not only be read as a text that preaches women's rights the realization of their full potential. Indeed, Sephodi tackles countless social evils in her book, including her description of the perverted sides patriarchy and how, like so many women and young girls in South Africa, was "sexually violated, repeatedly and by different men" (41) between the of six and twelve. "I did not tell my mother or immediate family [about epeated sexual violations], but I shared it with strangers" (42), she says. haring of these sad stories happens when she travels around Southern a as "part of a group that visited different cities to work with schools, munity organisations, churches, hospitals, old age homes and the home-(43). To her horror, she discovers that rape is not just a South African mare, as academic Pumla Dineo Gqola would want us to believe.[2] It is cerous disease that is "practisced" with impunity outside South Africa's rs as well. During one of her visits to an unnamed Southern African try in 2002, for example, Sephodi narrates her encounter with a four-ear-old girl who confided in her that she, too, had been violated repeat-s a child. Sephodi is quick to point out that it is not only women and who are raped by men. Men and boys, too, are victims of rape. An Easter nd convention organized by her local church in 2005 lets the reader in en's own experiences of the traumas of rape. During this convention, Se-i and fellow church members are shocked into silence when one of the h leaders, Sipho, comes forward in front of the congregants. "In his right he held a mic raised towards his mouth and he was weeping," Sephodi s before he blurted out, "I just want to say that I am tired of carrying s pain within me. I can't keep quiet anymore. I was raped when I was boy" (43–44). Such moments push most attendees to tears as they, one e, including Sephodi herself, come out of their shells to "confess" about own violations: "Story after story, tear after tear, there we were with tis-n our hands. The stories told were about the many hidden pains people ith" (45). Sephodi adds that this pain is not just from memories of rape but extends to feelings of "rejection, fatherlessness, racism and displace-" (45) most South Africans experience. Thus, Sephodi's book tackles a ber of pressing issues in post-apartheid South Africa and beyond.

GRIZELDA GROOTBOOM, *EXIT: A TRUE STORY*

ly, I focus on Grizelda Grootboom's sensational text *Exit: A True Story*. mmon feature of Grootboom's text is that it falls into the category of ry memoir" or, simply, "misery lit." This literary subgenre depicts per-suffering in a particular, almost formulaic pattern. According to Es-Addley, "the standard tale begins in childhood, and almost invariably

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involves some form of abuse at the hands of a trusted adult, usually a parent. It is frequently written in the first person . . . tracing a heartbreaking arc of lost innocence and damage."

In *Exit*, we see a detailed evocation of Grootboom's experience of trauma, following the rejection and abuses the author-narrator was subjected to both by her parents and, later, when she is commercially sexually exploited at the hands of sex traffickers in Johannesburg. She is raped at the tender age of nine while staying with her mom in Site C of Khayelitsha township in Cape Town. Sadly, the rape incident becomes a prelude to countless other scenes of sexual violation as she is left to wander the city's Cape Flats in search of a home and love from her equally cold and irresponsible father. She experiences delinquency, prostitution, abortions, blackmail, and drug and substance abuse for over eighteen years as she struggles to survive. She turns to God and starts campaigning against human trafficking in the concluding chapters of her book. In my view, *Exit* describes a sustained and well-choreographed confession of trauma; a drift toward suffering with hardly a glimpse of redemption and in which the author has to continuously fight for her life until Embrace Dignity, a South African NGO that fights sexual exploitation and provides support systems to women who want to exit the prostitution industry, encourages her to narrate her experiences to connect with people going through what Grootboom herself went through.

South Africa is a rainbow nation, a term coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and widely employed by President Nelson Mandela to celebrate the country's difference, diversity, and the latent psychosocial issues. This difference and diversity is also reflected in the myriad themes that inform recent South African life writing. One notes, for example, that besides the pernicious legacy of apartheid, a number of pressing issues such as rape, crime and violence, prostitution, human rights, drug and substance (ab)use, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor are tackled in South African life writing texts today, such as the ones discussed here. Perhaps this is what leads Kate Kelsall to assert that post-apartheid South Africa is far from the utopian "rainbow nation" because it is still beset by devastating social problems. Recent South African life writing is thus notable for its effort to gather multiple local frames of reference to teach us about love and loss, ambition, courage, resilience, self-esteem, and grim determination to get the best out of life.

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NOTES

Noah speaks English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu, Tsonga, Tswana, as well as German and Spanish.

In *Rape: A South African Nightmare*, Gqola controversially claims that rape is a uniquely South African issue and that South Africa is "the world [*sic*] rape capital." Gqola grimly asserts that rape has passed for "a national sport" in South Africa, adding that rape is made so visible in the country because public discourse focuses more on rape survivors than on the rapists themselves (6). She reiterates: "We often place so much pressure on women to talk about rape, to access counselling and get legal services to process rape, but very seldom do we talk about the rapists" (7). Thus, in her view, South Africans "run the danger of speaking about rape as a perpetrator-less crime" (7). Gqola then delves into a detailed analysis of how "South African public cultures enable and make excuses for rape" (7). As the book's jacket copy states, her book also focuses on "South Africa's various relationships to rape, connections between rape culture and the shock/disbelief syndrome that characterises public response to rape."

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BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION
THE YEAR IN SPAIN

JAUME AURELL

A survey of life writing in Spain over the past year reveals what appears at first sight to be rather a mixed bag. Spanish writers and scholars remain dubious of Jill K. Conway's dictum on the value of biographical and autobiographical writing: "the magical opportunity of entering another life is what really sets us thinking about our own" (18). For instance, it is no easy task to locate the Spanish equivalent of the "professional biographer" found in other traditions. Spanish biographical authors tend to be scholars of history and literary criticism who, at some point in their careers, decide to write a biography, or else journalists or writers of fiction whose attention is drawn by some important personality. At the same time, Spanish readers are resistant to the "biographical turn" experienced by other literary traditions. We do not know which counts for more, the writers' reluctance or the readers' lack of enthusiasm, but the fact is that there is not usually much space for the biography section on the shelves of Spanish bookshops.

However, there is reason to hope. Three main areas in particular can be highlighted: biographies arising from the context of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939); biographical work on intellectuals, writers, and politicians of the convulsed Spain of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and biographies around objects, marking new literary and historiographic trends. I am going to focus my discussion on these three areas, then finish off by pointing to some diverse examples that belong to other biographical and autobiographical thematic areas, but which are worth highlighting for their special significance. Finally, I will attempt to delineate the features that seem most characteristic of auto/biographical production in Spain over the past year.

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One of the most typical strands of biographical production concerning Civil War is the participation of foreigners in the conflict. The North rican brigadists or other European fighters were attracted to the terrible sh battle fields by a peculiar mixture of juvenile idealism, a strong ideo- al charge, and a certain naivety that collided with the highly complex cal and military situation they encountered on setting foot in the penin- Such is the perplexity that emerges from the compendium *Biografías del* which brief biographies of some of the foreign fighters in the civil war, as Philippe Bourrinet, Andreas Bülow, and Paolo Casciola are collected. ubtitle of the work, "revolucionarios, extranjeros, judíos, anarquistas, istas, bordiguistas, olvidados, internacionalistas, disidentes, exiliados, idas y otros malditos de la Guerra de España," graphically expresses the rdinary diversity of motivation and the plural origins of those who gave lives to the noble cause of combating fascism. Nevertheless, the value of ork and others like it lies in demonstrating that good intentions were ways accompanied by an adequate strategy. The radicalization typical of rs (so extreme in the case of the Spanish Civil War in distilling secular nces of a political, ideological, nationalistic, and even family nature) led impoverishing polarization on the two sides. This polarization raised the of violence and hatred to such a pitch that even the most lucid minds swept along by intellectual distortion and strategic disorientation. This is well reflected in the biographies contained in this volume, which an eloquent reading of this bleak panorama and helps to extract some ble lessons on what must never happen again in Spain, of course, but so many other parts of the world besieged by the spiral of violence.

ebeca Quintáns has published a biography of Emeritus King Juan Car- one of the best-known figures on the Spanish political scene in the sec- alf of the twentieth century, and whose appointment as king in 1975 considered the last direct political consequence of the Spanish Civil *Juan Carlos I: La Biografía sin silencios*. The hybrid nature of the author, h a historian and a journalist, makes itself felt in the work. Quintáns's ination of historical erudition and journalistic reach is the clearest ex- on of a problem facing biographical writing in Spain. Lean too far to- scholarly history, and you lose traction with the audience. Play up the alistic aspect, and you succeed in becoming more attractive to readers, ou diminish reliability. Quintáns nevertheless achieves a good balance en historical narrative and journalistic essay, something that ought to tivated even more in Spanish biographical literature. Quintáns shows here is no reason for good historical writing to preclude access to broad s of a readership interested in the great formative events of collective ory.

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The capture of this audience becomes evident when we turn to the second major field of traditional Spanish biographical writing: the one that deals with intellectuals and politicians, usually related to the dramatic events of mid-twentieth-century Spain. The biographies of the poets of the generation of 1927, especially Antonio Machado, Federico García Lorca, and Miguel Hernández, have traditionally exerted a particular pull on readers, as is demonstrated for example by a recent rerelease of the Ian Gibson classic, *Vida, pasión y muerte de Federico García Lorca*. A typical example in this field is the publication in 2016 of the biography by José Luis Ferris, *Miguel Hernández: Pasiones, cárcel y muerte de un poeta*, which has the great virtue of bringing together in a single volume the diverse facets of the great Alicante poet: his family, his emotional and literary life, and his suffering as a citizen during the Civil War. Two biographies of intellectuals and women writers who were in the vanguard of twentieth-century Spanish literature merit being highlighted here for the quality of the works themselves and the interest of the subjects: José Luis Ferris's *Palabras contra el olvido: Vida y obra de María Teresa León (1903–1988)* and Natalia Velasco Postigo's *Vida de Carmen Martín Gaite*.

Joan Maria Thomàs is a prestigious historian who has extensively researched Spanish Falangism. He is the type I mentioned above who has ventured into biography after having extensively experienced monographic writing. Thus, he gets closer still to the halfway point between scholarship and popular appeal with his biography of the main Spanish Falangist leader, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, titled *José Antonio: Realidad y mito*.

Another traditional element in Spanish biography, analogous to that of the poets of the generation of 1927 and which successfully combines erudition with audience interest, is that of the "politician and intellectual" figure so characteristic of the impassioned ideological atmosphere of nineteenth-century Spain. Eduardo Higueras Castañeda's work, *Con los Borbones jamás: Biografía de Manuel Ruiz Zorrilla (1833–1895)* fits snugly into this field of biographical production. Like Thomàs, Higueras Castañeda responds to the same type of scholar in history who at some point decided to have the biographical experience. Ruiz Zorrilla's personality is rather representative of the huge contradictions of a Spain that was fighting to assimilate the liberal tendencies being introduced from Europe, but which was at the same time so conditioned by the burden of its own history. The biography clearly shows the difficulty that Spain experienced in uniting tradition with innovation, above all from the war of independence against Napoleonic France in 1808. Ruiz Zorrilla is considered to be the last leader produced by nineteenth-century Spanish "progressivism," the party that was always in the vanguard of introducing liberalism to Spain, but which at the same time succumbed to

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creeping radicalization that finally degenerated into the fatal confronta-
of the Civil War in 1936. Higueras Castañeda effectively describes Ruiz
illa's struggle for the principles that emanated from the French Revolu-
(equality, liberty, fraternity) so characteristic of the first Spanish liberal
a. Ruiz Zorrilla opted for a more radical path than that represented by
ader of Spanish liberalism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century,
o Sagasta. His radical stances positioned him more in line with the mod-
emocracy that was being established in the great European nations, but
me up against the political immaturity of both the Spanish institutions
he people who represented them. In his time of exile (another essential
e in the production of Spanish biography), he headed the republican op-
ion against the Bourbon monarchy, hence the title of the work.
n this specific field, it is worth highlighting too the publication of the
ait of one of the most influential intellectuals of the second half of the
eenth century: the historian and traditional thinker Marcelino Menén-
elayo, a figure reconstructed by the historian Mario Crespo López in
afía de Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo. This is a work of scholarship rather
a narrative as such, and acquires an enormous historical interest from
based on primary sources. The recovery of these unique figures in some
of knowledge in Spain is a commendable task that finds its best ally in
iographical genre. Carmen García Matos's work, *Manuel García Matos:*
afía de un folclorista español, also stands out as a treatment of one of the
prestigious representatives of Spanish folklorism of the twentieth century.
he field incorporating biographies of intellectuals, poets, and artists in
mporary Spain has been once again enriched by the active publishing
of Catalan writing. Here the publication of a brief but substantial biog-
of the great modernist architect Antoni Gaudí penned by Josep Maria
gona Clarasó, titled *Gaudí, l'arquitecte de la Sagrada Família: Biografía*
stands out, as does *Jacint Verdaguer: Una Biografía*, by Marta Artigues
rodona and Narcís Garolera i Carbonell, an account of the life of the
ated nineteenth-century Catalan poet Jacint Verdaguer.
he permanent interest in these political and intellectual figures of nine-
h-century Spain clearly reflects the ability of biographical writing to con-
with the anxieties, debates, and intellectual, political, and ideological
mas of contemporary Spain. This strand also connects with biographies
litary figures, an extraordinarily developed field in the countries pub-
g literature in English, but which has yet to be properly established in
. This connection is reflected in minor but also interesting works such
guel Marchamalo Main's *El Capitán General Castaños, pasión por Espa-*
d the shorter but well-structured *El General Serrano: Biografía breve* by

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Trinidad Ortuzar Castañer. In addition, these biographies exhibit the multifaceted nature and human complexity of nineteenth-century Spanish soldiers who combined in their persons the military vocation and profession, and who felt called in their time to intervene in political life and thus endowed themselves with a strong ideological component and the corresponding intellectual heft.

Biographies of clerics who were influential in public life, a traditionally characteristic subgenre of biographical studies in Spain, have a good exponent in the work of Julio Jiménez Blasco, *El Cardenal José María Bueno Monreal: Un Humanista integral, una biografía, 1904–1987*. The tendency of the Spanish ecclesiastical hierarchy of the last two centuries to meddle in political questions is well reflected in this work, something that made them fit for genuinely commendable activity from the perspective of their role as pastors of the Church.

The third field of biographical studies in Spain is represented by the "biography of objects," a subgenre related to recent trends in both literature and historiography, which tend to emphasize the reality of the quotidian rather than the extraordinary or exceptional. Their authors have no particular theoretical interest or epistemic sophistication, but they have had the virtue of introducing in Spanish biographical studies a subject and an orientation that could have enormous potential in the future. Of special note here is the work of Vicente Lleó Cañal, *La Casa de Pilatos: Biografía de un palacio sevillano*. This is a history of the Palace of the Chief Governors of Andalusia, better known as the "Casa de Pilatos," a combination of Italian Renaissance and Spanish Mudejar styles, model, and prototype of the Andalusian palace. Lleó Cañal has effectively synthesized the biographical trajectory of the Casa de Pilatos, built between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, tracing its fascinating existence over five centuries of Spanish architectural history in which successive generations set about building, demolishing, restoring, and modifying its structures according to changes in social and aesthetic habits. Throughout this process, Renaissance, Baroque, and Romantic elements were being superimposed on the original Mudejar structure, resulting in a building of great historical wealth and aesthetic interest.

Also notable in this field, and more specifically in "biography of places," is Ignacio Merino's original study, *Biografía de la Puerta del Sol: De los comuneros al 15M*, in which he forensically examines the events that have taken place at this vital meeting point in the city of Madrid, with its social and political influence over the whole of Spain—from the fifteenth-century Revolt of the Comuneros to the famous populist rallies of March 15, 2011. As for biographies of cities that are also spreading their influence globally, there is *Estoig*

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elona: Una Biografía by Enric Calpena. Barcelona has a long tradition of g written about biographically, the most notable publications from past being those by Daniel Venteo in *Autobiografía de Barcelona* and in Rob- lughes's internationally recognized *Barcelona*, which came out under the ces of the Olympic Games half a century ago.

n other areas adjoining the biographical genre, I would like to intro- in this survey two works that interestingly combine the historical and iterary biographical approach. Jorge Freire has written an accomplished unt of the absorbing life led by intellectual Arthur Koestler titled *Arthur der: Nuestro hombre en España*. Freire has constructed an elegant hybrid e biographical genre, the spy novel, the historical reconstruction, and the sophical essay. It is a novel venture in literary style, whose introduction the field of biographical studies in Spain is highly opportune. It is no ac- at that its author is a young essayist, representative of the new generation anish *littérateurs* dedicated to life writing, who has moreover motivated elf to create a portrait of a non-Spanish figure.

is worth mentioning an example of the subgenre of collective biography is barely practiced in Spain. In *La Cara oculta de la biografía*, Francisco ado Montero has published a triple portrait of three great composers (Jo- Haydn, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga) that is om conventional in its eschewal of the traditional narrative techniques oyed by most biography. The portrait of Joseph Haydn is based on an inary dialogue between the composer and his first biographer, Georg Au- Griesinger. The Beethoven biography focuses on the last decade of the oser's life, when he is lacerated by his family, society, and health prob- Finally, the portrait of Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga tells the story of the Basque composer's life in Paris, which culminated dramatically in his at the age of twenty. Accompanying his early successes, there is also a l loneliness and the sense of crumbling family expectations. Three lives ee great geniuses, which again show us how, along with the pleasure of ion, there is always the pain and the tensions between artists and their onment.

inally, it is worth adding a short note on the subgenre of historical bi- hy. The historian María Jesús Fuente Pérez has constructed a convinc- ortrait of Queen Violant of Aragon, the wife of King Alphose X the in *Violante de Aragón: Reina de Castilla*. It is based on primary sources, of them unpublished. The figure of the queen is analyzed following the d of Ernst Kantorowicz's "the king's two bodies." The author focuses on ueen's political dimension and her skill in intercession and mediation, as s her cultural and religious patronage.

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In the particular field of the autobiography and memoirs, once again this year, the remarkable reluctance of Spain's literary, intellectual, and academic authors to write about their own lives is confirmed. I have been able to verify the almost negligible presence of Spanish historians among the four hundred fifty autobiographies that I used as primary sources to complete my study *Theoretical Perspectives on Historians' Autobiographies*. Among those hundreds of available historians' memoirs, only two notable Spaniards have written their autobiographies (and they are moreover unconventional historians, Claudio Sánchez Albornoz and Salvador de Madariaga), in stark contrast to other literary, academic, and historiographical traditions. This reluctance when it comes to writing memoirs and autobiographies might be due to the training Spanish students receive at the different levels from primary to university education, where theory is usually regarded with a certain amount of suspicion. Some academic centers are trying to make up for this notable deficiency. I would like to highlight here, for its intensive and extensive promotion of biographical and autobiographical studies, the Unitat d'Estudis Biogràfics at the University of Barcelona, created in 1994 and tirelessly driven on by Anna Caballé.

As I noted at the start, it seems that the biographical turn experienced by other literary and academic traditions has so far failed to materialize in Spain. The academic world does not promote biographical writing, starting with the lack of any tradition of constructing biographies as dissertations. With the above-mentioned exception of the Unitat d'Estudis Biogràfics, guided by Caballé, there are no Spanish academic units such as the Biografie Instituut in Groningen or the Oxford Centre for Life-Writing at Wolfson College. Biographical production is certainly abundant in Spain, and in some cases of good quality, but it finds itself rather hampered by the lack of specific training of some authors, and perhaps to the same degree, by the lack of mass interest on the part of readers. Biographical writing appears to be still too much the preserve of amateur authors, who seek their own fame at the expense of their subjects, rather than the fame of their subjects through their biographies. I will conclude with a key question: why is biographical and autobiographical writing still considered in Spain to be a "little brother" of historical scholarship and a "minor genre" within written literature? Some historians such as Manuel Fernández Álvarez, Josep Maria Thomàs, Isabel Burdiel, Mercedes Cabrera, María Jesús González Hernández, and José Enrique Ruiz-Domenec, and literary critics such as the above-mentioned Anna Caballé and Monica Bolufer have blazed a trail that ought to be continued in the future.

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IDENTITY POLITICS
THE YEAR IN THE UK

TOM OVERTON

In *Kenneth Clark: Life, Civilisation and Art*, James Stourton does not follow the lead of a subject who pursued autobiography both for its own sake and with ulterior motives: his authorial "I" is kept to a minimum, or tucked into footnotes or the latter stages of the book. Stourton does, however, frequently respond in kind to his subject's sheer writerliness and what he perceives as Clark's desire to amuse through a mastery of the anecdote (Stourton 378). In the first case, there are passages such as, "He was never theatrical, but knew when to bring the audience into the freemasonry of the profession—for instance, drawing people's attention to the only area in Giorgione's Castelfranco Madonna that has never been repainted" (227). In the second, while we learn the solid historical facts of how much Clark shaped twentieth-century Britain through his roles at the Ashmolean Museum, the National Gallery, the Royal Opera House, the wartime Ministry of Information and War Artists' Advisory Committee, the beginnings of Independent Television, and art history through books such as *The Nude* (1956), we also learn that Clark was reduced to a sneezing fit of annoyance and incredulity at Andy Warhol's Factory; described London's lauded, listed Brutalist South Bank Centre as "a cheap radio set"; and managed to save the historic architecture of Pisa when he discovered of the plans to bomb it while lunching.

Yet toward the end of his life, Clark was planning "a quasi-autobiographical account of my responses to works of art" to be called *Aesthete's Progress* (397), and Stourton describes the memoirs he did complete, *Another Part of the Wood* and *The Other Half*, as "adopt[ing] a detached, almost ironic tone in dealing with his life, which reminded some of the opening of *David Copperfield*, and others of Lytton Strachey" (377). Clark himself described the books as "a gallery of portraits" from which "the reader must deduce my character from the portraits of those who influenced me" (qtd. in Stourton 377).

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As Stourton asserts, Clark's primary influence was John Ruskin; his debt
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an never be sufficiently emphasized, and it informed many of his interests: the Gothic Revival, J. M. W. Turner, socialism, and the belief that art criticism can be a branch of literature. But above all, Ruskin taught Clark that art and beauty are everyone's birthright—and he took that message into the twentieth century. This is the central point of Kenneth Clark's achievement. (5)

k produced the anthology *Ruskin Today* (1964) to bring Ruskin to a new gen-on; he told his daughter Colette, "you don't have to read Ruskin now, I have it for you" (Stourton 267), and, in a footnote, Stourton recounts being told rofessor Christopher Brown, a more recent director of the Ashmolean Mu-, that the book had made him want to become an art historian (439). Stourton suggests there was a personal and not simply theoretical sense of ification when Clark wrote, in his 1948 introduction to Ruskin's auto-graphy *Praeterita*,

t is no accident that the three or four Englishmen whose appreciation of art has been strong enough to penetrate the normal callosity of their countrymen—Hazlitt, Ruskin, Roger Fry—have all come from philistine, puritanical homes. To be brought up in an atmosphere of good taste is to have the hunger for art satisfied at too early an age, and to think of it as a pleasant amenity rather than an urgent need. (15)

aps surprisingly, there is a similar formulation in *Familiar Stranger: A Life* ween Two Islands, the memoir Stuart Hall (1932–2014) constructed as a s of conversations with his friend—and now editor—Bill Schwarz.[1] The slands in question are Jamaica, where Hall was born in 1932, and main-Britain, at which Hall arrived in 1951 to take up a Rhodes Scholarship at rd University. Hall became a Marxist theorist and activist, and the book in the 1960s with its subject about to found the influential Birmingham re for Cultural Studies, where Bill Schwarz and many others would go study. Hall reflects,

's always seemed to me that even the most abstract theories are, to varying degrees, formed by their subjective conditions of existence: by, that is, the inner psychic namics of the theorist. I've felt this to be true of my own life. And this book nds as an experiment in drawing out what connections I can between my "life" nd my "ideas," in so far as they are ever separable. (63)

fascinating to watch Hall reframe theoretical ideas developed in a life-of publication in journals such as *New Left Review* as memoir. But this here the comparison with Clark breaks down: in his most influential

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work, the 1969 TV series *Civilisation: A Personal View*, autobiography becomes a kind of shield for ideas. Standing in front of Chartres Cathedral in the first scene, Clark quotes Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851–1853) to camera: "Great nations write their autobiography in three manuscripts: the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others, but of the three the only trustworthy one is the last" (qtd. in Stourton 341). *Civilisation* was an enormous enterprise, commissioned partly to persuade viewers to buy expensive new color TV sets: shot on 35mm film stock more commonly used for feature films, it attains some of the monumentality of the works of European culture that Clark and his crew traveled to film. For Stourton it was,

> a view of great men performing great deeds, so different from the Bloomsbury view—Keynes apart—that civilised men eschewed the life of action. He trumpeted those Victorian views of activism that Lytton Strachey had ridiculed in *Eminent Victorians*, and subscribed to Thomas Carlyle's view that history is about heroes, adapting the title of episode 5, *The Hero as Artist*, from Carlyle's lecture "Hero Worship and Heroes in History" (1840). (342)

Though there were thirteen hour-long episodes, there have been many complaints about exclusions. Even accepting the limitation of looking solely at *Western European* civilization, this result is an almost entirely male picture and there is nothing substantive on how even that aspect was transformed by the influence of Spain or contact with the Islamic world more broadly. At one point in the subsequently published book version, Clark blithely states, "Mahomet, the prophet of Islam, preached the simplest doctrine that has ever gained acceptance; and it gave to his followers the invincible solidarity that had once directed the Roman legions" (7). Similarly, there is an overall effect of what is at best naivety about what enabled any of these cultural artefacts to be made. Stourton tries to explain this effect away with reference to a notebook in Clark's archive: "Warn BBC not Marxist, not a history of economics, nor of political ideals . . . religion will play a bigger part than economics" (321).

The art historian and British Museum director John Pope-Hennessey thought the programs were Clark's "true self-portrait. They show him in countless different contexts exactly as he was" (qtd. in Stourton 342). If Carlylean biography was both the structural principle of *Civilisation* and the thing that opened it up to criticism, autobiography was the means by which this criticism was defensively anticipated, from the subtitle *A Personal View*, to the final scene, wherein Clark faced the problem of concluding by delivering a "Credo." After self-deprecatingly referring to himself as a "stick-in-the-mud," Clark affirms that "above all I believe in the God-given genius of certain individuals, and I value a society that makes their existence possible" (qtd. in Stourton, 343–44).

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David Olusoga, author of the 2016 book and TV series *Black and British: Forgotten History*, has stressed, "As a historian who's also a documentary pro- ar I hold Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* in great reverence" (Onwuemezi). ether it was meant as such or not, *Black and British* is a useful companion *ilisation*, making the essential point that black people have been a com- ly inextricable part of British history since Roman times. Though the ect is notionally narrower—Britain rather than Western Europe—Oluso- cessarily addresses it in reference to Sierra Leone, the United States, the bbean, and beyond. "I was trying to look at black British history beyond biography," he told the *Guardian* (Akbar). Here, the danger of the Car- an model is that the eminent, talented, and influential individual becomes ception which proves the rule of the marginality of Black British experi- . "These exhumed figures need to be incorporated into mainstream his- ," Olusoga insists (Akbar). It is perhaps this attendance to the mainstream has resulted in the subtitle's gentle use of the word "forgotten" rather the arguably more accurate "suppressed."

Olusoga's attitude doesn't preclude the vivid delineation of individual acters, such as the Elizabethan trumpeter John Blanke, or Dr. Johnson's ant and surrogate son Francis Barber. Likewise, specific individual stories er complicate Clark's binary between civilization and barbarism. Olusoga oduces Carlyle as "the first apostle of [the] new racism" of the Victorian 369) whose "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question" (1849) was ear hysterical denunciation of the humanity of black people which be- e an influential assault upon British anti-slavery politics" (24). Both Car- and John Ruskin (394) supported Edward Eyre, governor of Jamaica, n he was called to account for a six-week "orgy of bloodletting" in which black Jamaicans were killed:

> Six hundred men and women caught by the troops were flogged; some men were lashed with wire whips, leaving them with egregious injuries. In addition to these crimes against the person over a thousand homes were burnt and men and women who had worked their way out of absolute poverty, having left the plantation penniless and homeless, were again reduced to destitution. (387)

oga explains the endpoint of his book thus:

> Historians tend to be cautious when it comes to commentating on the modern age, the period through which we are currently living. For me, the period from the 1980s onwards is the one I know from personal memory as well as through historical study, which probably clouds more than it clarifies judgement. But I strongly recall that in the 1980s there was a strong sense among black people of being under siege, and of feeling the need to fight for a place and a future in the country. (517–18)

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This was the period in which Reni Eddo-Lodge was born, and her *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race* is a vital means of pursuing the story. Uniquely among those under review here, the text emerged from that more recent of life writing's forms, the blog post. Making the point that British people often know more about the history of African American civil rights than struggles in the UK, it serves as a corrective that attends to intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Eddo-Lodge speaks most directly to the histories discussed by Olusoga on the subject of the campaign to remove the statue of the colonialist Cecil Rhodes from Oriel College Oxford and the attendant disingenuous accusations of erasing history: "To insist that Rhodes Must Fall campaigners were restricting discussion was simply a lie. The work of the protest movement brought little-known aspects of Britain's colonial involvement in Africa to primetime news, exposing the facts to audiences who almost certainly wouldn't have learnt about it on the national curriculum" (131–32).

The Great Men of Britain, of course, did not cease their involvement on a world stage after Rhodes, and Ian Cobain's *The History Thieves: Secrets, Lies and the Shaping of a Modern Nation* (2016) describes the genuine erasures of history they perpetrated. In trying to tell the story of the people given the orders, Harry Parker's novel *The Anatomy of a Soldier* (2016) swerves Carlylean biography and pursues life writing as object-oriented ontology. Its most evocative description comes in the most recent installment of one the most sustained and productive projects of self-examination in recent British literature, Alan Bennett's collection of diaries and occasional pieces *Keeping On Keeping On* (2016):

> this is not just a novel written out of someone's head but a book written on his own body. It's about a soldier who is blown up by a roadside bomb as Parker himself was and who loses his legs just as he did. As the narrative comes up again and again to the moment of the explosion I find I can only read two or three pages at a time. . . . Hard, too, is the way he has chosen to tell it through the equipment he carried . . . his phone, the camp bed on which he sleeps, the items of medical equipment used on the operating table and the plasma and the drugs that drip into him. Even the bacteria that get into his wounds has a voice. . . . it is of course more than a novel and a tale of both sides, the ending unbearable. (373–74)

The book's most obvious predecessor is Tim O'Brien's Vietnam collection *The Things They Carried*; less directly, there are parallels with the displaced histories of human interconnection in Edmund de Waal's *The Hare with the Amber Eyes* or Neil MacGregor's *History of the World in a Hundred Objects*.

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MacGregor's project was backed by the institution he then directed, the ish Museum, and by BBC Radio 4: here was a kind of public service dcasting of comparable aims—and achievements—to *Civilisation*, which learned some of its lessons on perspective. Yet in March 2014, the BBC unced an official sequel, *Civilisations*, which will approach the problems tried to solve through autobiography by simply adding more subject-ions.

Where "the original series focused on the influence of Western art . . . the version will expand to include civilisations from Asia to the Americas, a as well as Europe" (Dowell). The title's plural is carried through in the e of presenters: Simon Schama for six episodes; two with David Olusoga, wo with the classicist Mary Beard, who regularly finds herself drawn into es about representations of women in media and history: she delivered ndon Review of Books lecture at the British Museum titled "Women in r" in March 2017, to be published in book form in November.

The *London Review of Books* were more ambivalent about what—perhaps e Silver Press's UK reissue of Audre Lorde's *Your Silence Will Not Protect* –was the year's central radical feminist talking point. Chris Kraus is tech-ly both author and character of *After Kathy Acker*, having overlapped so-with her subject in the American and British art worlds and very clearly on her influence earlier in her writerly career. Finding "that her own iences were becoming more and more like Kathy's," the book's cover an-ces, Kraus "began writing about Acker 'through the distance, but with ncredible frisson of feeling that often I could write "I" instead of "she". is literary friction.'" The allusion here is to the flysheet of Acker's own *Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula by the Black Tarantula* (1973), which unces, "Intention: I become a murderess by repeating in words the lives her murderesses."

The *LRB* review, by Jenny Turner, found these "strange, insinuating things t on the cover of what seems to be a perfectly straightforward, conven-lly put together literary biography," as she had found no confusion of ience, very little autobiographical inclusion, and only,

> few critical evaluations. And she does occasionally betray the odd note of dislike nd disapproval, the latter mostly regarding what she obviously sees as Acker's hope-ssness with money. Kraus writes a lot in her own novels about money matters, and had she had a windfall like Acker got, would probably by now own every apartment building in New York. (Turner 14)

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If you want to withhold the promised autobiography, Turner seems to be saying to Kraus, I'll insert some biography: the allusion here is to the fact that Kraus supports her writing career through real estate (Heti), an activity that sits uneasily with her current popularity among artists who are largely millennial and thus largely renting.

In Richard Holmes's *This Long Pursuit: Reflections of a Romantic Biographer* and Claire Tomalin's in *A Life of My Own*, two of the most eminent British biographers are more completely both author and character of their own books. Holmes's book began as distinct lectures, chapters, and introductions. As what Holmes terms "a biographer's declaration of faith: the pursuer pursued" (341), this book forms the third of a trilogy with the earlier *Footsteps* (1984) and *Sidetracks* (2000). Holmes has his *bildung* as a biographer begin very early, pursuing Robert Louis Stevenson through the Cevennes as an unpublished eighteen-year-old; his first book on Shelley was published before he was thirty. Tomalin did not find her vocation until later in life; she was asked to develop an article in the *New Statesman* on Mary Wollstonecraft into a biography and "it changed everything for me. I now had a purpose and a field to explore and a good use for my brain, because biography is history, and demands wide-ranging and intense research if it is to be any good. I was intensely happy" (188). Hers, the more cohesively monographical of the two books, incorporates letters into the body of the text and analyzes them as she would with any of her subjects. If one might have assumed being doubly author of a life would provide a sensation of control, the actual results can be surprisingly deterministic: "One thing I have learnt is that, while I used to think I was making individual choices, now, looking back, I see clearly that I was following trends and general patterns of behaviour which I was about as powerless to resist as a migrating bird or a salmon swimming upstream" (ix–x).

A year is a small span to trace such trends or patterns in life writing in the UK, especially that contained within long-gestated book or film projects, and, as I explored last year, the geographical and cultural meanings of Britishness have been drawn into an intense process of questioning by the Brexit vote. But against this backdrop there has been an interesting amount of work that both interrogates the subject-positions constructed by life writing and uses those subject positions to reflect more broadly on society. The *Civilisations* book deals have now been signed, and we will have to wait until 2018 to see how the series works (Dowell). But it is typical of the current, cautious, nostalgic mood of contemporary British television that it will fail to duplicate the chief characteristic of *Civilisation*—the simple fact of its being a new idea.

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NOTE

Though Duke University Press is leading on the publication of Hall's work posthumously, *Familiar Stranger*'s UK publication by Allen Lane represents a central event in the year's life writing on this side of the Atlantic.

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RECKONING WITH HISTORY, FORM, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN AMERICAN MEMOIR

THE YEAR IN THE US

LEIGH GILMORE

The weight of history lies heavily upon this review essay. The year was marked by a presidential contest and election of profound consequence. The impact of a Trump presidency becomes clearer as challenges pile up. On a global level, warming temperatures in the Atlantic promise storms of increasing ferocity as the US backs out of the Paris climate agreement, suspends EPA regulations and wilderness protections, touts the benefits of bringing back coal, and fails in its recovery effort in Puerto Rico. At the national level, protests against racial injustice stemming from acquittals in trials of white police officers who have killed black citizens connect street actions in Baltimore and Ferguson to national scenes of NFL players taking a knee during the national anthem. Meanwhile deportation of the undocumented and a seeming declaration of war by the Republican majority on the disabled and women through its effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act are met with resistance and dismay. In this context, some memoirs this year have spoken especially loudly about the centrality of rape, sexual assault, and gender-based abuse in histories of colonialism, genocide, and American politics. Memoirs grappled not only with forces of harm and injustice, but with their scope: from family legacies to haunting histories of genocide and the persistence of racism and sexism in all facets of public and private life, this was a year in which memoir scaled up. I will offer an overview of some trends before focusing on three that grapple with structural/collective violence.

First, a sampling of life narratives that centered the personal in relation to history. From rock stars, we had an initial offering from Bruce Springsteen with *Born to Run*, and Patti Smith, Springsteen's cowriter on "Because the Night" and his forerunner in life writing, joined the ranks of serial

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obiographers by following her 2010 memoir *Just Kids* with the diaristic *M* and the essayistic *Devotion*. Life writing performed politics by narra- means in J. D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy*, a project bearing the imprimatur ontroversial "tiger mom" Amy Chua and swaddling cliché in the guise of e truths. Established writers, too, turned to life writing, including estab- ed serial autobiographers like Edwidge Danticat, who continues to dem- trate that the story of one's life is anything but a single narrative unspool- in chronological order. Danticat's *The Art of Dying* follows *Brother, I'm ing* and her recent essay collection *Create Dangerously*. Taken together, they prise a trilogy of works concerned with life, death, and the sacred role of literary witness. Danticat's profound humility suggests an ethical stance memoirs about family that would serve well someone like J. D. Vance, shows little of this regard for his Appalachian kin.

Formal innovation in life writing is always a rich terrain and was popu- d in the previous year by Sarah Manguso's *Ongoingness*, Maggie Nelson's *Argonauts*, and Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*, among oth- This year Brian Blanchfield's first-person essay collection, *Proxies*, stands Subtitled *Essays Near Knowing* in the US and "a memoir in twenty-four mpts" in the UK, Blanchfield's writing is of a piece with the formal in- ators he identifies as his "life writing heroes: Michel Leiris, Hervé Guib- Chris Kraus, Dodie Bellamy, Alison Bechdel" (Krull). Two enabling con- ints shape *Proxies*: the first is Blanchfield's "total suppression of recourse to oritative sources," which allows readers to consider anew how life writers ge with memory, and second is Blanchfield's decision to focus on vul- bility. "On Feet Washing," one of twenty-four chapters to address bodily erability and shame, connects the Christian practice of foot washing to octetes's chronic wound and his stepfather's own similar lesion that his her cares for daily. It is a striking meditation on their marriage: "After ty five years of marriage she knows this part of his body best. He hasn't really seen it. Often, during, feeling nothing, he watches television" (18). his way, each chapter ("On Peripersonal Space," "On Frottage," "On s") probes the connective tissue of memory where family, sex, and one's ing history touch. *Proxies* preserves the order in which Blanchfield writes unresearched" essays so that the temporality of composition "may corre- d to what might be called a self" (viii). Blanchfield eschews other forms oherence, always a matter of choice in memoir but hidden by conventions rder one can borrow (chronology, for example). To claim form as a proxy he self suggests new paths of analysis for life writing studies.

Similar to Blanchfield's focus on life writing as a form for self-invention experimentation, a new anthology of women's essay writing in the twenty-

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first century, much of it life writing, also offers new opportunities for life writing scholarship by organizing an archive and offering a new critical term for understanding it. Editor Marcia Aldrich coins the term "waveform" to center the significance of form to women's personal nonfiction and to collect work by diverse writers, many of whom have written full-length memoirs or life writing essay collections, including Eula Biss, Cheryl Strayed, Alexandra Marzano-Lesnevich, and Roxane Gay.

Let's turn now to a trio of memoirs that contend with the nation's violent history and how it is borne in the bodies of its inhabitants. These memoirs also manifest how the narrative of this past is incubated within American memoir itself. This history—of genocide, slavery, and misogyny—is woven into the form by virtue of memoir's unique rooting in history and the ways in which the individual stands in as a representative of a democratic population. Unlike other genres, memoir is always twinned with or haunted by history. Or so memoirs by Roxane Gay, Sherman Alexie, and Hillary Clinton make me believe. There can be no American memoir writ large in the absence of a reckoning with the nation's violent history. The legacy is transmitted generationally through a form that connects the testimonial and abolitionist commitments of slave narratives to confessional and anti-confessional memoirs published during the long memoir boom (1980s to the present). As I have recently argued, trauma incubates in the testimonial network, as well as judgments that attach racism and sexism to some life writers.[1] In the American lineage of the form we see what I would call "autobiographical epigenetics" that expresses itself as theme, at the level of the sentence, and in the tragedy of representativeness in contemporary American life writing where trauma stories are representative of collective experience and the nation's history.[2] Trauma is embedded in the form as surely as it is embedded in those who experienced it.

The difficulty of bearing witness to the weight of history characterizes two new memoirs by prominent authors who, for the first time, tell stories around which they have long circled. For Roxane Gay, it is the story of violence—a gang rape at age twelve by a boy she liked and his friends. She has previously referenced something terrible in her past that broke her, but she offers this account to tell the story of her body and the weight she began to gain as if it would protect her from future harm. The parentheses in her title *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* visually signals the fortress around the self that her body represents and marks the difficulty of the bracketed female self and voice breaking out of its ambiguous armor. In conjunction with body, it represents a decision to become particular, recalling Adrienne Rich's observation in "Notes Toward a Politics of Location" that "When I write 'the body,'"

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nothing in particular. To write 'my body' plunges me into lived experi-
particularity" (215). This is a "my body" memoir. Gay tells the story of
and the fallout from it: she explores what it means to have an experience
iolation without a language for it, what it means to have a self and a body
can be harmed in ways she could not fathom, and how the levels of learn-
about her own experience represent a life's work. Unlike the expected arc
weight-loss narrative, Gay tells a weight-gain story. She exposes the sen-
ntality of narratives in which women triumph over their hunger, as she
vers their sexism, as if the only important work a woman's body must do
rink as her power over her hunger grows. Oprah comes in for sharp criti-
as purveyor of female redemption through the suppression of hunger—
woman as powerful as Oprah still measures her self-worth according to
scale, Gay asks, what chance do the rest of us have to resist this demean-
norm? On the other hand, Ina Garten, cooking sensualist extraordinaire,
ds as a liberating figure who lives happily with the pleasures of appetite.
aded throughout the narrative is the insight that her body, tall and large
x foot two and five-hundred-plus pounds, became a cage and a fortress,
ding both a response to trauma and an inarticulate strategy of protection
was hiding in plain sight. Indeed, these words recur throughout the short
oir and the repetition begins to feel purposeful. It feels insistent, but it
feels helpless, as if this is a story that must be told again and again even as
abundantly clear that something terrible happened to Gay and continues
ppen to women and girls every day. She trusts her readers with the story
at the same time doubts the culture's capacity to hear it.

Sherman Alexie's memoir *You Don't Have to Say You Love Me* is about his
her, Lillian, and his complicated relationship with her. After writing some
ty books in which he says he identified with his father—a Native man
m Alexie describes as an alcoholic with his best days far behind him—he
es he more closely resembles his mother: a brilliant and caustic dynamo,
dary quilt maker, and one of the last fluent speakers of her native lan-
e. His mother's untreated bipolar disease was characterized by episodes of
a and overwhelming self-absorption. She was also a figure of tremendous
sma and power who would have been the tribal leader if women could
that position. Alexie interrupted his book tour this summer because his
her seemed to be haunting him, and his unfinished grieving over her re-
death was threatening his own stability. Like Lillian, Alexie has bipolar
se; unlike her, his is diagnosed and treated. As in Gay's memoir, the past
ts. Alexie is a Spokane/Coeur D'Alene Indian, and the Spokane are a
on tribe, but, as Alexie writes, "the Grand Coulee Dam murdered my
's history" (180). The permanent damage of settler colonialism and geno-
are made vivid in this analogy: "What is it like to be a Spokane Indian

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without wild salmon? It is like being a Christian if Jesus had never rolled back the stone and risen from his tomb" (181). Like Gay, Alexie employs repetition because "that's what grief is" (372). Repetition is also a signature of trauma.

Following Blanchfield's notion that form is a proxy for the self, the voice of the traumatized self who repeats talismanic words and phrases represents the persistence of a history whose influence cannot end until there is a reckoning. For Alexie, there is a sense in which he is offering prayers of accusation and healing together. The prayer repeats the traumatized self's lament. But the stories are age-old and ceaseless: his mother's conception was the result of a rape, his mother's first daughter was also a result of rape, and rape-as-lineage is a story Alexie has struggled to know and tell. In part, it is a tale that is as familiar as it is shocking. Native women suffer the highest rates of sexual abuse and domestic violence (Rosay). Some advocates place the number at nearly 100 percent and address this prevalence in the context of historic trauma, genocide, and dispossession.[3] Alexie also struggles with how his mother, a chronic and manipulative fabulist, apportioned the telling of these truths. As damaged as she was, she struggled to bear witness in ways that only sometimes protected Alexie. As he travels deeply into the pain of women in his family, Alexie wonders: "What were my grandmother and mother thinking and feeling as they gave birth to daughters of rape? As they raised those daughters? . . . How does the child of rape develop self-esteem? How does it feel to look into a mirror and see your rapist father's face? . . . How much forgiveness does it take to survive all of that?" (365). Sexual violence is woven into history and borne in the bodies of women who transmit it involuntarily and at an incalculable and opaque cost to themselves. How does it feel, indeed.

Hillary Clinton wades into the catastrophe of the 2016 election of Donald Trump with *What Happened*, a memoir that builds on her previous autobiographical and political writing. She has written previous books that conform to conventions of their type, but *What Happened* is different. In a sense, it is a braided narrative of three strands. The first is a classic behind-the-scenes account of momentous public events (the nomination of the first woman of a major political party in the US, the catastrophe of election night, the surrealism of the inauguration). We hear her thoughts about Trump's debate performance—"Trump stalked and lurked" (106)—as well as inspiring stories about people she has known over a long career of public service. The second is a patient and rigorously presented case of the unprecedented forces that derailed her that reads like a memo addressed to Robert Mueller. As she lays it out, Clinton's historic run was tanked by the interference of international and national agents in the election. Russian meddling combined with former FBI Director James Comey's eleventh-hour announcement that a new inspection

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er email showed—again—that there was no case to prosecute against
ton. Fake news and its delivery systems of Fox News and social media
ed a role that is still under scrutiny by Congress and policy analysts.[4] The
d strand illustrated in the chapter "On Being a Woman in Politics" ven-
s onto the terrain Alexie and Gay stake out. Here the histories are long
violent, the antagonists real and present, and the future likely to contain
e of the same because Clinton is attempting to tell the story of misogyny
merican politics. To tell that story, Hillary Clinton must reckon with the
low opponent she—and all women—run against: "Historically, women
n't been the ones writing the laws or leading the armies and navies. We're
the ones up there behind the podium rallying the crowds, uniting the
try. It's men who lead. It's men who speak. It's men who represent us to
world and even to ourselves" (121). Given this world picture and its in-
sigence, Clinton observes: "People cast their votes based on feelings like
all the time" (121). As she widens the frame to identify the context that
es her campaign and life make sense, she must include this deep bias
ast women and its pervasive influence in American life. She further iden-
s "authenticity" as part of this bias. Women's capacities are doubted be-
e we are women, and this circular reasoning fails to check itself by intro-
ng credible benchmarks; instead, women are measured against standards
gitimacy calibrated to promote men. Beyond other candidates and inter-
nal disruptors, Clinton faced the historical bias that women are not the
ls of men in terms of leadership and power. We all have to reckon with
consequences of that.

NOTES

Testimonial networks, through which first-person writing circulates to diverse readers and audiences, are laden with judgments that stick to writers who write about harm and injustice (see Gilmore, *Tainted Witness*).

I have written about representativeness and autobiography previously (see *The Limits of Autobiography*) to claim that the prevalence of traumatic experience was manifested in a surge of publications during the memoir boom that shifted the grounds of American representativeness to the subject of trauma.

This assessment of prevalence was offered during the Battered Women's Justice Project's training for advocates for sexual assault and domestic violence survivors in Savannah, Georgia, November 1, 2017. I participated as a plenary workshop leader.

For testimony before Congress, see Shaban et al. The Shorenstein Center established that news media in the US introduced a false equivalence between Trump and Clinton in their coverage of the campaign. This constituted serious distortion of the records of the candidates (Patterson). See my analysis of distorted coverage in "It Wasn't Just 'Fake News' Presenting a Fake Hillary Clinton."

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BIOGRAPHY AND THE SUBJECT
THE YEAR IN THE US

CARL ROLLYSON

Modern biography begins with James Boswell, who took up Samuel Johnson's challenge to render a life in "minute details" (5). Boswell boasted that after reading his life of Johnson you will know Johnson better than any human being who has ever lived. Making good on that boast meant befriending the biographical subject, tagging along with Johnson on his many outings and at home among his familiars. Since Boswell, some of the greatest biographies in the English language derive from the interplay of biographer and subject, even if, as in the cases of James Anthony Froude and Elizabeth Gaskell, the biographer remains (mostly) in the shadows. These biographers tacitly endorse Johnson's proposition that to capture the whole man, you need to be in his physical company. In the past year, several American biographers have tested out the Johnsonian dictum—most recently in James Atlas's *The Shadow in the Garden*, which is at once a memoir of his life as a biographer and, in a way, a new biographical account of Saul Bellow and Delmore Schwartz, about whom Atlas has already published biographies. Now, however, he writes in a personal vein, measuring not only how he responds to his many meetings with Bellow but also how he interacted with evidence in archives and interviews in his pursuit of Bellow and Schwartz. The result is a riveting account not merely of one biographer's experience but also Atlas's take on his predecessors—on how Boswell, Froude, Lawrance Thompson, Mark Harris, Andrew Field, and other biographers behaved in the presence of their subjects.[1] Many biographers have written about their own experience and about the history of biography, but I can't remember another biographer like Atlas who so carefully writes himself into the history of biography and of biographers.[2]

It is more typical of biographers, even when they have interviewed their subjects, to stay in the background and to tuck any personal comments into the front or back matter of a biography.[3] Thus Ted Geltner, author of *Blood, Bone, and Marrow: A Biography of Harry Crews*, includes an epilogue about

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frequent talks with the novelist during his last days, when Crews knew he dying. Similarly, in *The Untold Journey: The Life of Diana Trilling*, a de- Natalie Robins writes a preface about her own experience with Trilling, cribing her subject's apartment while employing locutions such as "one ces."

Yet another take on the biographer's proximity to his sources is offered by redoubtable Richard Holmes in *This Long Pursuit*. Holmes insists that the grapher should "physically pursue his subject through the past" (5). The grapher has to be there, Holmes insists, to get inside his subject: "He must how they once were" (6). Among biographers, this notion has taken hold made of Holmes himself a romantic figure—the fellow who has been e and done that. He serves, too, as a rebuke to armchair biographers who ot rough it (sleeping outdoors and braving all weathers) as Holmes has e in his (it must be said again) pursuit of his subjects. In short, the biog- er as hero, ladies and gentlemen.[4]

Holmes's biographical axioms disintegrate if, like Hegel, we push a the- o its extreme. How limited is knowledge if it depends on your GPS? As mes himself knows, in fact it is not possible to position yourself in your ect's place, since that place is forever changing—not only in space but me. At best, the biographer can dredge for fragments of the past and, Proust, get a taste of history in a biscuit. For antithesis, I will cite a fic- l example: in *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin Compson reconstructs a Civil scene in such vivid detail that he thinks: "*No. If I had been there I could have seen it this plain*" (Faulkner 190, italics in original). And when and e does he draw this conclusion? Not on a Civil War battlefield, not even s native South, but in 1909, inside a cold—indeed, a freezing—Harvard nitory room that Faulkner mentions fourteen times. As the novel makes Quentin Compson cannot make sense of Thomas Sutpen or of his prog- when he is close to home in Jefferson, Mississippi. Only at Harvard, only the help of a Canadian, Shreve McCannon, who has never been to the h, can Quentin pull himself together to create what is, in essence, a bi- phy.

I think Holmes gets carried away with the proximity premise because he Romantic writing about Romantics—in short, the biographer as disciple, one of Boswell's innovations. Of course, discipleship can result in biogra- s approaching hagiography, as in Michael Foot's splendid, if all-too-par- iography of Aneurin Bevan, or in the debunking variety, when the biog- er turns against his master, as Frederick Crews does in *Freud: The Making n Illusion*. Crews never knew Freud, but he writes as though he does—so ain is the literary critic that he can read his subject's motivations. I don't

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see how Crews could be quite so negative if he was not so absolutely certain of his ground. This literary critic spent his early years pioneering the Freudian approach to literature only to turn against it, making Freud out to be in this new biography nothing short of a rigid, even authoritarian personality with an antipathy to science, excommunicating followers who disagreed with him, inventing positive results from psychotherapy sessions, and skillfully telling good stories, making himself out to be a sleuth of the unconscious as adept at finding clues as the Sherlock Holmes Freud read avidly. All too often in his account, armed, he believes, with incontrovertible evidence of Freud's duplicity, Crews tells us what Freud "must have" thought or felt. Beware the biographer who presumes but cannot prove. To say "must have" is the equivalent of admitting what is actually not known, and to write "must have" immediately precludes other possibilities: that a subject may act out of character or in ways the biographer has not considered. In short, Crews shares Freud's adamantine self-assurance, and, at least, in that ironic sense, biographer and his subject do fuse.

Art historian and biographer, Nicholas Fox Weber, author of *Freud's Trip to Orvieto*, did not know Freud either, but he writes as a sort of insider, a biographer deeply sympathetic to the psychoanalyst and his ideas, and as an analysand who grew up in a household and community full of Freudians. Fox Weber un-Freuds Freud in the nicest sort of way, speculating that his subject, in some ways, did not know his own mind, which is why, in this particular case, Freud could not remember the name of the artist, Luca Signorelli, who painted *The Last Judgment*. Even as Crews dismantles Freud's world case by case, Fox Weber does the opposite—not to build up Freud exactly but to show how resonant Freud's reading of art remains, no matter the master's shortcomings. Fox Weber reads the paintings in person more carefully than his predecessors, who seem not to have reconstructed what Freud saw in situ. What is apparent to Fox Weber, the eyewitness, is Signorelli's startling, blatant homoeroticism. Knowing how Freud made much of similar names, Fox Weber sees the "Sig" in Sigmund and Signorelli as dispositive: the similarity in the first three letters leads to Fox Weber's forays into Freud's attraction to certain men and to his need to assert his masculinity and his Jewishness to compensate for his own father's failure to do so. In the *Washington Independent Review of Books*, Rose Rankin succinctly sums up the hazards and benefits of Fox Weber's approach:

> At times, Weber's faith in psychoanalysis seems quaint, like a midcentury relic. The rise of cognitive behavioral therapy makes it difficult to put much stock in Freudian psychoanalysis these days, but am I just saying that because psychoanalysis brings up uncomfortable thoughts in me? Am I repressing by rejecting this method? In the chapters on psychoanalysis, it's impossible to know what is real.

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Weber should stick to art history and criticism, for this is where he has the most to share with readers. His vivid analysis brings faraway frescoes and lesser-known paintings into vigorous reality, and his idea that Freud suppressed Signorelli's name because of his reaction to the work's homoeroticism makes perfect sense when you explore the paintings with him.

not know what Richard Holmes would say about a book that out-Freuds d, but Fox Weber's passionate desire to stand exactly where Freud stood ainly motivates a dramatic and compelling biographical narrative.

But what of a biographer, Megan Marshall, who has a class and a few oth- eetings with her subject, Elizabeth Bishop, but also remains on the pe- ery, never a major player in the narrative and yet is insistent that her own rience matters? Readers come to a biography not expecting to confront iographer's life. Short of Boswell's brilliance, a contemporary biographer tely to be chastised for making a memoir out of a biography:

> Marshall's attempts at memoir are painfully earnest. "I'd taken him a loaf of banana bread I baked one week, in lieu of a poem," she reports about her interactions with one Harvard professor. Each of these reveries, some of which include samples of the biographer's own verse ("Take flight, larks with a freedom earthbound creatures/ Can't know"), is about three slices short of a loaf and has no place here. (Garner)

shall may have seen her own experience as contrapuntal, throwing into relief Bishop's own periods of struggle and meager output, but Dwight ner in the *New York Times* did not see the point. Langdon Hammer, also e *New York Times*, did not think the biographer went far enough in her ventions: "we don't learn enough about Marshall for her life to take on pendent interest, and the memoir ends up being mainly a distraction." These reviewers, however, may have missed the subtlety of Marshall's ap- ch, according to Claudia Roth Pierpont in *The New Yorker*:

> Marshall, an aspiring poet in her youth, writes from a deep sense of identity with her subject: she studied with Bishop at Harvard, in 1976, and her biographical chapters are interspersed with pages of her own memoir, also centered on family, poetry, and loss. It's an odd but compelling structure, as the reader watches the two women's lives converge, and it allows for some closeup glimpses of Bishop as a teacher. Marshall seems still sensitive to having given up poetry, the one great thing that Bishop, for all her losses, never let go. There's an emotional undertow even in Marshall's treatment of poetic forms (the sestina, for example, of Bishop's early poem "A Miracle for Breakfast," or Marshall's student attempt at the mad complexities of Catullan hendecasyllabics) and in her unwavering reverence for the magic that form cannot explain.

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Marshall stands in for the reader, in some respects, calling to mind the notion that readers of biography do measure their own lives against the subjects they admire. The first question often asked of a biographer is "How did you choose your subject?" And the answer is often autobiographical, and yet most biographers dare not tell that part of the story because the biographer's voice is supposed to be muted and, as James Atlas laments, the biographer becomes a shadow of himself, subordinating his feelings to those of his subject's. To Bellow, Atlas was sometimes "Jim," sometimes "James," or "Mr. Atlas," depending on the state of the novelist's constantly changing attitude toward his biographer.

As I was writing this account of the year in American biography, I received an extraordinary letter from David N. Wetzel. It is the kind of statement that speaks to the fraught issue of how the biographer conducts himself, and why, in certain instances, he feels compelled to become—if not exactly a character—then a figure or voice in his own work. Wetzel wrote to me because, in *Biography: A User's Guide*'s section on innovative biography, I discuss the introduction of the writer into the narrative as one way to address the epistemological problem biographers encounter in understanding the motives of their subjects.

Wetzel's letter is also valuable because it expresses the biographer's frustration with reviews that so often evince little, if any, understanding of the biographer's methodology. In *The Vanishing Messiah: The Life and Resurrections of Francis Schlatter*, Wetzel employs a first-person narrator. In his letter to me he justifies this approach as aiming

> primarily to address a fundamental ontological problem most biographers don't encounter. My subject, one of the most sensational healers of the nineteenth century, disappeared at the height of his fame in 1895, staged his death in Mexico, and re-emerged under his own name two years later. Most likely Schlatter will remain what Wallace and Wallechinsky in *The People's Almanac* called a "footnote" figure in American history. But my book adds a new element to innovative biography because Schlatter's life and all that is now known about him, pivots on the fulcrum of a single document, a Cincinnati hospital record of August 1896.
>
> Reviews of my book, mostly in western history journals, have focused on whether or not Schlatter lived beyond his historically accepted death in Mexico and the degree to which my argument was persuasive. But they miss the point. *The Vanishing Messiah* is a study in deception. Nearly every significant historical document I encountered was either unreliable or directly deceptive—and the pattern of deceit grew out of Schlatter's conviction that he would return to usher in a millennial kingdom at the turn of the twentieth century. When his apocalyptic vision failed in 1899, he was forced to live in the shadow of his own identity.

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> You can see the dilemma I faced in treating this subject conventionally. Adopting a first-person narrator to supplement the historical narrative served as a way to introduce speculation, discovery, and argument while letting the reader observe the process rather than being forced to react to it. I don't know if this approach was the best way to address the ontological problem or not, but I went through several failures otherwise—along with, of course, a few lost agents and publishers. (Wetzel, personal communication)[5]

That last sentence, by the way, hints at the secret history of biography, of how books get shaped by the rejections and misunderstandings of publishers, agents, and others in the book business. The provenance of a biography, of how it comes to be, is one of the significant subjects that I will have to explore another year.

NOTES

Boswell developed biography as a dialogue between subject and biographer and between the subject and other interlocutors. I follow this approach in *A Private Life of Michael Foot*, sometimes, like Boswell, making myself the focal point of a discussion with my subject, and at other times, again like Boswell, placing myself on the periphery as Foot engages in conversation with others. In *Anthony Burgess: A Biography*, Roger Lewis has a fascinating and instructive opening section in which a dialogue ensues between biographer Richard Ellmann and Burgess, with Lewis as witness. Victoria Glendinning does something similar in an introduction, capturing a dialogue between her subject and her sister in *Rebecca West: A Life*. Neither Lewis nor Glendinning extends this dialogic approach to the rest of their biographical narratives.

In *A Higher Form of Cannibalism?: Adventures in the Art and Politics of Biography*, I occasionally align my work with the history of biography as exemplified in the works of Boswell, Froude, and Richard Aldington, but I do not systematically integrate my work into a narrative that is as autobiographical as Atlas's. He constantly measures himself against his subjects in, it seems to me, an unprecedented fashion. Why? Because, as his title suggests, most biographers prefer to remain in the shadows.

Peter Stephan Jungk suggests another way to handle the presence of the biographer. In several italicized passages he visits the places where his subject, Franz Werfel, lived, writing in the present tense about what those places look like now. This ploy dramatizes the efforts to recover the past, recognizing how much has changed since the subject's time as well as what remains constant, and how much (or little) the biographer can do to recapture the past. In *Lillian Hellman: Her Life and Legend*, I appear in brief passages quoting interviews with witnesses to my subject's life in an effort to show how the biographer interacts with his sources.

Two more intrepid biographers are Norman Sherry, in the Holmes tradition, and Jonathan Cape, who published his three-volume biography of Graham Greene in 1989, 1994, and 1999.

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Engel-Pearson, Kim. *Writing Arizona, 1912–2012: A Cultural and Environmental Chron* U of Oklahoma P, 2017.

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Faber, Sebastiaan. *Memory Battles of the Spanish Civil War: History, Fiction, Photograp* Vanderbilt UP, 2017.

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Grasso, Linda M. *Equal under the Sky: Georgia O'Keefe and Twentieth-Century Feminism*. of New Mexico P, 2017.
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…, Nancy. *Primo Levi and the Identity of a Survivor.* U of Toronto P, 2016.
…the complex role that shame and Levi's Jewish identity played in his choices of how …his survival, as well as his theories of bystander complicity.

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…Mark. *Absolute War: Violence and Mass Warfare in the German Lands, 1792-1820.* …rd UP, 2017.
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…Michael J. *The Afterlife of John Fitzgerald Kennedy: A Biography.* Cambridge UP, …
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Hopkins, Stephen. *The Politics of Memoir and the Northern Ireland Conflict.* Oxford UP, 2
Analyzes in-depth the politics of memoir-writing in the context of the Northern Ireland Trou

Howard, Helen Addison. *Saga of Chief Joseph.* U of Nebraska P, 2017.
Updates Joseph's previous biography by presenting significant new material from In
sources.

Horáková, Martina. *Inscribing Difference and Resistance: Indigenous Women's Personal*
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Examines the ways non-fiction published in the 1990s contributed to theoretical artic
tions of Indigenous feminism and interventions into settler colonialism, reading work
Paula Gunn Allen, Anna Lee Walters, Lee Maracle, Shirley Sterling, Jackie Huggins,
Doris Pilkington Garimara.

Hull, Mark M., and Vera Moynes. *Masquerade: Treason, the Holocaust, and an Irish Impo*
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Analyzes how a child turned traitor to her country and rebranded herself as an Irish pa
and intellectual, while denying historical reality.

Hunt, Swanee. *Rwandan Women Rising.* Duke UP, 2017.
Shares the stories of over ninety women in the wake of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and
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Hunter, Marcus Anthony, and Zandria F. Robinson. *Chocolate Cities: The Black Map of A*
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...ow, Jeff, Sean Kidd, Tyler Frederick, and Jean M. Hughes. *Homeless Youth and the ...rch for Stability*. Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2018.
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... Hugh. *Love Letters from Transylvania: A Memoir of Blood Cancer, Identity, and Sto...lling*. Michael Hanrahan Publishing, 2015.
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...Olivia. *Follow the Maid: Domestic Worker Migration from Indonesia*. NIAS Press, 2017.
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...uk, Kristine. *Preserving on Paper: Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Receipt Books*. ...f Toronto P, 2017.
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... Andrew J. *Autobiographical Comics*. Bloomsbury, 2017.
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Kusek, Robert. *Through the Looking Glass: Writers' Memoirs at the Turn of the 21st Cent* Jagiellonian UP, 2017.

Provides a detailed and comprehensive study of the writer's memoir and an exploration of micro-genre's poetics by focusing on such marqueurs as phantasmatism of the pact betw writer and reader, (auto)biographism of the space inhabited by the text, syllepsism of subject, de-totalization in terms of scope and thematic content, as well as generic khôrac

Laughlin-Schultz, Bonnie. *The Tie That Bound Us: The Women of John Brown's Family and Legacy of Radical Abolitionism.* Cornell UP, 2017.

Illuminates the changing nature of how Americans remembered Brown's raid, radical a slavery, and the causes and consequences of the Civil War.

Lee, R. Alton. *Publisher for the Masses, Emanuel Haldeman-Julius.* U of Nebraska P, 2017.

Uses Haldeman-Julius to discuss early twentieth-century radical politics and publishing.

Lee, Edward Ashford. *Plato and the Nerd: The Creative Partnership of Humans and Technol* MIT P, 2017.

Argues that technology is not competing but coevolving with humans, cognitively and ph cally.

Lehman, Eric D. *Homegrown Terror: Benedict Arnold and the Burning of New London.* U New England, 2017.

Rethinks Arnold through the lens of this episode and sheds light on the ethics of the dawn nation, and the way colonial America responded to betrayal and terror.

Leite, Naomi. *Unorthodox Kin: Portuguese Marranos and the Global Search for Belonging* of California P, 2017.

Paints a portrait of Portugal's urban and tracks how visions of self and kin evolve over ti and across social spaces to create belonging.

Leskelä-Kärki, Maarit. *Toisten elämät: Kirjoituksia elämäkerroista.* Avain, 2017.

An essay collection on biographical traditions, women's biographical writing in Finla theory of biography, and biography in art (theatre, music, film, fiction).

L'Hoeste, Héctor D. Fernández. *Lalo Alcaraz: Political Cartooning in the Latino Commun* UP of Mississippi, 2017.

An analysis of Alcaraz's cartoons for the many ways his art attests to the community's str gles.

Lidström Brock, Malin. *Writing Feminist Lives: The Biographical Battles over Betty Fried Germaine Greer, Gloria Steinem, and Simone de Beauvoir.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Draws attention to the controversy that surrounds women's lives and the important role t their life stories have played in their feminist writing.

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Reid B. *Vernacular Catholicism, Vernacular Saints: Selva J. Raj on "Being Catholic the ...l Way."* SUNY P, 2017.
...ographic studies to explore "vernacular" Catholic traditions in Tamil Nadu, India.

...ra. *Complicated Lives: Girls, Parents, Drugs, and Juvenile Justice.* Rutgers UP, 2017.
...s how girls' relationships with parents contribute to the girls' future drug use and ...ent in the justice system.

...on. *The Life of Paper: Letters and a Poetics of Living Beyond Captivity.* U of California ...017.
...rates how correspondence among the incarcerated becomes a poetic act of reinven- ...a means for living.

...b. *The Baltimore Elite Giants: Sport and Society in the Age of Negro League Baseball.* ...s Hopkins UP, 2017.
...ow the team, its personalities, and its fans raised public awareness of the larger issues ...Blacks in segregation-era Baltimore through interviews and archival documents.

... Raymond. *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography.* ...ed., Sage Publications, 2017.
...ductory guidebook to fieldwork and a discussion of the future of ethnography in a ...tworked society.

...e, Claudie. *Trance Speakers: Femininity and Authorship in Spiritual Séances, 1850–* ...0. McGill-Queen's UP, 2017.
...séance archives and photographs to offer a new feminist and psychoanalytical ap- ...the religious and creative practice of trance.

...laudia. *Joseph Beuys.* U of Chicago P, 2017.
...at Beuys's self-mythology confronted post-traumatic life head on, foregrounding a ...or psychic recovery.

...d, Robert M. S. *Confounding Father: Thomas Jefferson's Image in His Own Time.* U ...ginia P, 2017.
...ow Jefferson's bifurcated image took shape both as a product of his own creation ...ponse to factors beyond his control.

... Verity. *Women of Empire: Nineteenth-Century Army Officers' Wives in India and the ...West.* U of Oklahoma P, 2017.
...e lives of US and British officers' wives for insight into their authority and identity- ...within imperial practice.

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McPherson, Robert S. *Both Sides of the Bullpen: Navajo Trade and Posts*. U of Oklahoma P, 20
Draws on oral histories from Natives and traders over thirty years to investigate ways Navajo tradition shaped economic practice from the late 1800s to early 1900s.

Merish, Lori. *Archives of Labor: Working-Class Women and Literary Culture in the Antebel United States*. Duke UP, 2017.
Delves into autobiographies, pamphlet novels, theatrical melodrama, and labor periodi to recover working-class women's vital presence as writers and readers in the antebellum

Mickenberg, Julia L. *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream*. U of Chic P, 2017.
Recounts the experiences of women and reveals the motives that drew American women Russia.

Morris, Aldon. *The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*. U California P, 2017.
Exposes the economic and political factors that marginalized the contributions of Du B and delivers a wholly new narrative of American intellectual and social history of Du Boi

Morrison, Dane A. *True Yankees: The South Seas and the Discovery of American Identity*. Jo Hopkins UP, 2017.
Draws on private journals, letters, ships' logs, memoirs, and newspaper accounts to tr America's earliest encounters on a global stage through the experiences of five Yankee seafar

Mwaniki, Munene Franjo. *The Black Migrant Athlete: Media, Race, and the Diaspora in Sp* U of Nebraska P, 2017.
Studies ten celebrity and non-celebrity lives and media portrayals to interrogate the nuan of white supremacy and the migrant experience.

Nagra, Baljit. *Securitized Citizens: Canadian Muslims' Experiences of Race Relations and Id tity Formation Post-9/11*. U of Toronto P, 2017.
A study of fifty interviews with young Muslim adults to reveal how this group experien national belonging and exclusion.

Navickas, Katrina. *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789–1848*. Oxford UP, 201
Uncovers new evidence about urban and rural resistance from a wide range of primary sou es, including diaries, Home Office correspondence, trial records, and newspapers.

Nelson, Deborah. *Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, McCarthy, Sontag, Weil*. U of C cago P, 2017.

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e careers of these women and their challenges to the preeminence of empathy as the osture from which to examine pain.

ch, Rachel. *Everyday Life in Global Morocco*. Indiana UP, 2017.
experience of one modern family is narrated as an example of how global issues of ation, changing diets, and nontraditional approaches to marriage are impacting lives.

is. *Trapeze: The Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin, 1947–1955*. Swallow Press, 2017.
"unexpurgated" version of Nin's life substantially different from those she pre- the initial sequence of popular diaries.

Mieko. *Diaspora and Identity: Japanese Brazilians in Brazil and Japan*. U of Hawai'i 017.
Japanese immigrants and their descendants' constantly shifting sense of identity neration, gender, and transnational migration.

an, Francis. *Forgetfulness: Making the Modern Culture of Amnesia*. Bloomsbury, 2017.
w forgetting has been embraced as a requirement for modern living, alongside cul- atives that urge us to resist our collective amnesia.

Bonnie Carr. *Literary Celebrity and Public Life in the Nineteenth-Century United s*. U of Georgia P, 2017.
w celebrity culture collapses distinctions between public and private spheres, and s assumptions about the self and personhood, through reading the works of P. T. Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederick Douglass, and Fanny Fern.

arah E. *Nuns Navigating the Spanish Empire*. U of New Mexico P, 2017.
m Sor Ana de Cristo's biographical account of Sor Jerónima and other archival explore the nuns' experience with travel, evangelization, and empire.

att, Mark. *Flavors of Empire: Food and the Making of Thai America*. U of California 17.
istories to examine the rise of Thai food and the way it shaped the racial and ethnic of Thai American identity and community.

n Gwi. *The Displacement of Borders among Russian Koreans in Northeast Asia*. Am- m UP, 2017.
rical and ethnographic research to chart the contemporary social life of Koreans in ex borderland region.

chard C. *Medical Imperialism in French North Africa: Regenerating the Jewish Com- y of Colonial Tunis*. U of Nebraska P, 2017.
diverse community resistance to various colonial urban and public health "regenera- jects that aimed to destroy and recast Jewish lives in Tunisia.

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Parry-Giles, Shawn J., and David S. Kaufer. *Memories of Lincoln and the Splintering of A can Political Thought.* Pennsylvania State UP, 2017.

Analyzes over five hundred reminiscences of Lincoln and what they reveal about citizen presidential leadership, class, and character.

Pender, Anne. *Players: Australian Actors on Stage, Television and Film.* AustLit Ebook, 20

A collection of essays that document and interpret the specific contributions of actors how they have shaped Australian ideas, culture, and identity.

Perkins, Alexandra Gonzenbach. *Representing Queer and Transgender Identity: Fluid Bod the Hispanic Caribbean and Beyond.* Bucknell UP, 2017.

Demonstrates how transgender and queer bodies redefine national belonging through g movement and community-making practices.

Pfeffer, Carla A. *Queering Families.* Oxford UP, 2017.

In a chapter titled "Trans Partnerships and Families: Historical Traces and Contemp Representations," offers an extended discussion of published autobiographical and biogra cal literature focusing on transgender identity, partnerships, and families.

Porter, Edgar A., and Ran Ying Porter. *Japanese Reflections on World War II and the Ame Occupation.* Amsterdam UP, 2017.

Presents an account of the effects of WWII and the subsequent American occupation on prefecture through firsthand accounts of Japanese people who lived there.

Portillo, Annette Angela. *Sovereign Stories and Blood Memories: Native American Women tobiography.* U of New Mexico P, 2017.

Examines Native American women's autobiographical discourses and argues that the plexity of these life stories resists generic classifications.

Possing, Birgitte. *Understanding Biographies: On Biographies in History and Stories in Bi phy.* UP of Southern Denmark, 2017.

Identifies and reflects on the traditions in international writing and reading of biogra with examples from a wide range of Western and Nordic countries.

Rice, Monika. *"What! Still Alive?!": Jewish Survivors in Poland and Israel Remember Home ing.* Syracuse UP, 2017.

Traces the ways in which the passage of time and a changing geopolitical context influe the survivors' memories.

Rifkin, Mark. *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determina* Duke UP, 2017.

Uses autobiographies, among other genres, to explore how Native experiences of time ex and defy settler impositions.

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Lisa. *San Francisco's Queen of Vice: The Strange Career of Abortionist Inez Brown Burns.* of Nebraska P, 2017.

spapers, court records, and interviews to explore Burns's work as an abortionist and ir domestic ideology.

eva, Irina V. *In Search of a Dream America: Place in the Life Writing of Eastern Euro- Immigrants.* Peter Lang, 2017.

of autobiographies by Vasily Aksyonov, Mary Antin, Eva Hoffman, Edward Limonov, iam Potocky-Tripodi.

Charley. *The Chosen Game: A Jewish Basketball History.* U of Nebraska P, 2017.

erviews and anecdotes to explore the contribution of Jewish people to present-day nal basketball.

um, Susanna. *Domestic Economies: Women, Work, and the American Dream in Los les.* Duke UP, 2017.

depth ethnographic research to argue that domestic service is an intimate relation- reveals two versions of female personhood.

Karen R. *Archives of Dispossession: Recovering the Testimonios of Mexican American deras, 1848–1960.* U of North Carolina P, 2017.

n legal land records, personal letters, and literature to locate voices of Mexican Amer- nen in the Southwest, to show how property ownership affected identity formation.

Erika, editor and translator. *A Nobel Affair: The Correspondence between Alfred No- nd Sofie Hess.* U of Toronto P, 2017.

a critical introduction on Nobel and Hess's letters.

aschal, Nichole. *The Kind of Man I Am: Jazz Masculinity and the World of Charles gus Jr.* UP of New England, 2017.

ngus as a lens through which to craft a gendered cultural history of postwar jazz

eve, and Ed Godziszewski. *Ishiro Honda: A Life in Film, from Godzilla to Kurosawa.* of New England, 2017.

w light on Honda's work and the experiences that shaped it, including his days as a soldier, witnessing the aftermath of Hiroshima, and his friendship with Kurosawa.

Jane. *Race and Redemption: British Missionaries Encounter Pacific Peoples, 1797–* 30. Eerdmans, 2017.

neworks of gender, Othering, and "brothering" to analyze interactions between mis- and Native peoples.

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Saunders, Edward. *Arthur Koestler.* U of Chicago P, 2017.
Differentiates the life Koestler led from the story he wanted to tell about it and various w
the public influenced his reputation after his death.

Sayen, Jamie. *You Had a Job for Life: Story of a Company Town.* UP of New England, 201
Draws on conversations with scores of former mill workers to reconstruct the mill's hur
history and the devastating impact of global capitalism on a small New England town.

Sayers, Edna Edith. *The Life and Times of T. H. Gallaudet.* UP of New England, 2017.
Uses Gallaudet's life to explore a history of the paternalistic, bigoted, and class-consci
roots of a reform movement.

Schmitt, Arnaud. *The Phenomenology of Autobiography: Making It Real.* Routledge, 2017.
Argues that current trends in the field of life writing have taken the focus away from the
and the initial purpose of autobiography as a means for the author to communicate wi
reader and narrate an experience.

Schulz, Joy. *Hawaiian by Birth: Missionary Children, Bicultural Identity, and U.S. Colonia*
in the Pacific. U of Nebraska P, 2017.
Explores the parental, cultural, and educational forces on the first Hawai'i-born generat
of missionary children, and the impact of these children on nineteenth-century US fore
policy.

Scott, David. *Stuart Hall's Voice: Intimations of an Ethics of Receptive Generosity.* Duke
2017.
Explores the ethos of style that characterized Stuart Hall's intellectual vocation through
letters.

Shandler, Jeffrey. *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age: Survivors' Stories and New Media P*
tices. Stanford UP, 2017.
An in-depth study of the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, focusing on narrat
language, and spectacle to think about the mediation of public memory.

Silva, Noenoe. *The Power of the Steel-tipped Pen: Reconstructing Native Hawaiian Intellec*
History. Duke UP, 2017.
Celebrates Indigenous intellectual agency in the midst of US imperialism and calls for
further restoration of Native Hawaiian intellectual history to help ground contempor
Hawaiian thought, culture, and governance.

Simonet-Tenant, Françoise, et. al. *Dictionnaire de l'autobiographie: Écritures de soi de lan*
française. Honoré Champion, 2017.
This dictionary offers an overview of several decades of autobiography studies since the 1
publication of Philippe Lejeune's seminal *Le Pacte Autobiographique.*

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..., Emily. *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. New ... UP, 2017.
...s and explores stories of how trans men assimilated into mainstream communities ... 1800s.

...t, Arro. *Capturing Our Stories: An Oral History of Librarianship in Transition*. ALA ...blishing, 2017.
...om the professional life stories of dozens of librarians to chronicle the second half of ...ieth century, when librarianship experienced monumental upheaval.

...hilip D. *From Praha to Prague: Czechs in an Oklahoma Farm Town*. U of Oklahoma ...017.
...s the cultural identity and path to Americanization of rural migrant Czechs at the ...e twentieth century.

...C. Riley. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. U of Minnesota P, ...7.
...writing, among other texts, to attend to how slavery and the production of racialized ...ovided the foundations for an understanding of gender as mutable.

... Monica. *Cissy van Marxveldt: A Biography*. Atlas Contact, 2017.
...phy of Cissy van Marxveldt (pseudonym of Setske Beek-de Haan, 1889–1948) with ...n her self-presentation as a writer of books for girls.

... Monica, editor. *Lief dagboek, beste kameraad: Cissy van Marxveldt in Engeland*. ...ep 14, 2017.
...y of Cissy van Marxveldt (pseudonym of Setske Beek-de Haan, 1889–1948) with a ...troduction and annotation.

... Monica, and Nina Wijsbek, editors. *De puberdagboeken*. Thomas Rap, 2017.
...n of quotations from diaries of adolescents from the collection of the Dutch Diary ...with a critical introduction.

... Susan. *Albert Reuss in Mousehole: The Artist as Refugee*. Sansom and Company, 2017.
...om interview and correspondence to write the biography of Jewish painter and ... Albert Reuss, and reveals how his experience as a war refugee impacted his art.

... Liz. *The Racialising Process: Whites Writing Whiteness in Letters, South Africa 1770s–...0s*. Amazon Digital Services LLC, 2017.
...how white people from the 1770s to the 1970s in South Africa depicted whiteness ...acialized Others of black, coloured, Indian, Chinese, and other groups, focusing on ...ers.

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Stark, Douglas. *When Basketball was Jewish: Voices of Those Who Played the Game*. U of Nebraska P, 2017.

Collects oral histories to chronicle Jewish basketball throughout the twentieth century.

Stevens, Ilan. *I Love My Selfie*. Duke UP, 2017.

Analyzes the selfie and its role in contemporary life by exploring it in the context of the history of Western self-portraiture, mythology, literature, art, and philosophy.

Stoltz III, Joseph F. *A Bloodless Victory: The Battle of New Orleans in History and Memory*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2017.

Explores how generations of Americans have consciously revised, reinterpreted, and reexamined the memory of the conflict to fit the cultural and social needs of their time.

Šukys, Julija. *Siberian Exile: Blood, War, and a Granddaughter's Reckoning*. U of Nebraska P, 2017.

Weaves memoir and biography to examine the Holocaust era.

Takazawa, Kōji. *Destiny: The Secret Operations of the Yodogō Exiles*. Edited by Patricia Steinhoff, U of Hawai'i P, 2017.

Offers Takazawa's investigative journalism of a radical group of New Left Japanese in Korea in the 1970s and 1980s.

Tandeciarz, Silvia R. *Citizens of Memory: Affect, Representation, and Human Rights in Postdictatorship Argentina*. Bucknell UP, 2017.

Studies sites, texts, and visual narratives that remember a traumatic history, and explores the role of memory as history with affect.

Tate, Michael L., editor. *The Great Medicine Road, Part 3: Narratives of the Oregon, California and Mormon Trails, 1850–1855*. Arthur H. Clark Company, 2017.

Annotates and introduces letters, diary entries, reports, and recollections of American pioneers.

Taylor, Helena. *The Lives of Ovid in Seventeenth-Century French Culture*. Oxford UP, 2017.

Explores early modern French lives of Ovid.

Thompson, Paul, with Joanna Bornat. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. 4th ed., Oxford UP, 2017.

A handbook and theoretical guide to the field of oral history. New content in this edition includes a chapter on non-Western cultures, a chapter on related or parallel fields to oral history, a chapter authored by Lynn Abrams on the contributions of theory to oral history, and interview extracts.

Throntveit, Trygve. *Power without Victory: Woodrow Wilson and the American International Experiment*. U of Chicago P, 2017.

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...at Wilson was not a "Wilsonian," as that term has come to be understood, but a ...d pragmatist in the tradition of William James.

...ne M. *Minds in Motion: Imagining Empiricism in Eighteenth-Century British Travel ...erature*. Bucknell UP, 2017.
...hat the genre of travel literature operates at the front line of a period's intellectual ...cents, around the role of self and imagination in knowledge production.

...ble. *With the Witnesses: Poetry, Compassion, and Claimed Experience*. McGill-Queen's ... 2017.
...s the strategies of witness poetry and its reformulation of the dominant models of ...tudies.

...ter J. *Joey Jacobson's War: A Jewish Canadian Airman in the Second World War*. Wilfrid ...rier UP, 2017.
...a lively and intimate account of a Jewish Canadian's life in the air and on the ground.

...Vanessa K. *Diasporic Blackness: The Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg*. ...NY P, 2017.
...s the life of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg through the lens of both Blackness and ...d.

...rs, Nicholas. *Sexography: Sex Work in Documentary*. U of Minnesota P, 2017.
...s the ethical questions raised by ethnographic documentary and interviews with ...marginalized subjects.

...n. *A Tiger Remembers: The Way We Were in Singapore*. U of Chicago P, 2017.
...onal narratives to bring to life generations of social change through a focus on the ...n of the family.

...n, David. *The Eddie Cantor Story: A Jewish Life in Performance and Politics*. UP of ... England, 2017.
...s the legacy of Cantor's performances and efforts to redefine Jewish culture and build ...ity in the contemporary US.

...ok, Joel. *Freud: An Intellectual Biography*. Cambridge UP, 2017.
...a radical look at Freud in his broader cultural context, addressing critical issues and ...g stereotypes.

...Kimberly G. *Back to the Blanket: Recovered Rhetorics and Literacies in American Indian ...ties*. U of Oklahoma P, 2017.
...or the use of Native rhetorics—oral, embodied, material, visual, etc.—to analyze a ... Native texts and examples of communication.

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Williams, Kelsey Jackson. *The Antiquary: John Aubrey's Historical Scholarship*. Oxford UP, 2
Illuminates the thought and method of an early modern scholar and his antiquarianism u
extensive archival research.

Windeatt, Barry, editor. *Julian of Norwich: Revelations of Divine Love*. Oxford UP, 2016.
Critical introduction provides extensive biographical and theological scholarship on the e
est author writing in English who can be identified as a woman.

Zwerdling, Alex. *The Rise of the Memoir*. U of Toronto P, 2017.
Juxtaposes seven examples of the memoir to explore how and why they were conceived
shaped, stressing both the needs of memoirists and the appeal (and problems) of the for

EDITED VOLUMES AND SPECIAL ISSUES

a/b: Auto/Biography Studies, vol. 32, no. 1, 2017, "Teaching Lives: Contemporary Pedag
of Life Narratives."

McNeill, Laurie, and Kate Douglas. "Heavy Lifting: The Pedagogical Work of Life
ratives." pp. 5–14.
Frames essays in this collection as extending the conversation of how pedagogi
life narratives must be dynamic in their response to new understandings and ex
ences in the world.

Benjamin, Shanna Greene. "Black Women and the Biographical Method: Undergr
ate Research and Life Writing." pp. 15–26.
Responds to Darlene Clark Hine's suggestion that Black women are compelle
conceal their life stories and offers a case study to teach faculty how to guide stu
research on the lives of subjects prone to secrecy.

Passeggi, Maria da Conceição, Simone da Rocha, and Luciane De Conti. "Auto
graphical Narratives: Pedagogical Practice as a Lifeline for Hospitalized Child
pp. 27–38.
Focuses on the meanings created by children with illnesses who create auto
graphical narratives about their experiences coping with chronic disease and
pitalization.

Vitanova, Gergana. "Multimodal Autobiographies as Sites of Identity Constructio
Second-Language Teacher Education." pp. 39–53.
Explores the role of multimodal storytelling in the construction of second-langu
teachers' identities.

Edwards, Natalie, and Christopher Hogarth. "Autobiography in the Language C
room." pp. 55–65.
Examines the ways that autobiography can be used across language curricula.

Drake, Jennifer. "Embracing the Surface: How to Read a Life Narrative." pp. 67–74
Presents one teacher's experience of teaching life narrative courses and the reac
practices she supported students in developing.

Bloom, Lynn Z. "Coming to Life: Teaching Undergraduates to Write Autobiograp
pp. 75–86.

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Explains the theoretical and pedagogical rationale for personal writing courses, incorporates advice to help students understand the genre and to read and write with authority, and demonstrates how an autobiography workshop functions.

…ker, Debra. "The Pedagogical Potential of Memoir in an Interdisciplinary Context." pp. 87–95.

By means of a case study of an undergraduate interdisciplinary seminar, argues that a self-conscious assessment of disciplinary assumptions and an awareness of the affective aspects of the practice of life writing are important factors to consider for memoir pedagogies.

…Neill, Laurie, and Kate Douglas. "Risky Business: Teaching 'Fails' in the Auto | Biography Classroom: An Introduction." pp. 97–100.

In short essays, leading auto/biography scholars reflect on experiences teaching life narratives, considering occasions when things did not go according to plan.

…k, Julie. "Teaching Life Writing: Four Ways to Fail." pp. 100–04.

Provides a list of "fails" that can cause misperceptions in a teaching environment about life writing as a subject.

…kind, Candida. "Graphic Life Narratives and Teaching the Art of Failure." pp. 104–06.

Argues for the importance of teachers' empathizing with students in the life writing classroom even while encouraging students to empathize with a variety of life experiences shaped by larger historical, political, social, and cultural forces.

…phy, Sarah. "Learning with *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book* in a Cultural Studies Course." pp. 106–11.

Argues that decolonizing curricula is an ongoing project and efforts to prompt self-scrutiny and change through engagement with a radical text are no replacement for dedicated, specific, community-embedded courses taught by Indigenous scholars.

…wes, Craig. "'I Won't Remember—for You': What Life-Writing Criticism and Theory Could Bring to the Autobiographical Writing Classroom." pp. 111–15.

Offers comments on how life writing critics and scholars could, and perhaps should, provide recommendations to their creative writing colleagues on how to anticipate and head off potential difficulties that emerge in creative nonfiction classrooms.

…tti, Anna. "Teaching Fail: The Life-Writing Scholar's Cameo Appearance." pp. 115–18.

Reflects on the author's experience as a guest lecturer in an undergraduate elective subject on eighteenth-century English literature, where she felt that her presence was completely useless.

…vol. 32, no. 2, 2017, "What's Next?: The Futures of Auto/Biography Studies."

…chen, Emily, and Ricia Anne Chansky. "Looking Forward: The Futures of Auto/Biography Studies." pp. 139–57.

Describes the collaborative and inclusive dialogic space of this issue, in which multiple scholars share their viewpoints on the futures of auto/biography studies.

…une, Philippe. "A New Genre in the Making?" pp. 159–61.

Argues that to answer "what's next?" we must also ask ourselves, "what came before?"

…k, Julie. "Derailment: Going Offline to Be Online." pp. 163–65.

Suggests that next for the field should be a way to take what we know and to go

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offline to derail assumptions that we have had about what lives are.

Holden, Philip. "The Transnational, Global, and Planetary." pp. 167–69.
Argues that new studies of life writing that think of border crossings in a la sense can intervene critically both in present and future narratives of crossing the planetary.

Karpinski, Eva C. "Migrations and Metamorphoses." pp. 171–73.
Meditates on life writing as a genre, drawing on affect theories and Malabou's c cept of plasticity.

Naghibi, Nima. "Exilic-Diasporic Life Writing and Human Rights: A Diasporic Iran Perspective." pp. 175–77.
Discusses how diasporic-exilic narratives offer potential to explore the role of narrative and storytelling in the pursuit of a humane and empathic world.

Hornung, Alfred. "Life Writing in and beyond the Anglophone World." pp. 179–81
Argues for the establishment of a new forum in which all life writing efforts in disciplines and all languages are recognized.

Poppenhagen, Nicole. "Transpacific Life Writing." pp. 183–85.
Argues for multidirectional exchange and intensified collaborative efforts betw Asia and the Pacific in life writing studies.

Rifkind, Candida. "Graphic Narratives." pp. 187–90.
Suggests that graphic life-narrative study will explore a greater diversity of gen geographies, and platforms to theorize new modalities of authorship, narrative, reading.

Moody, Joycelyn. "New Directions in African American Autobiography Studies." 191–94.
Discusses how new directions in Black life writing remember, represent, and de the myriad means by which African Americans navigate an anti-Black universe.

Howes, Craig. "How's Life? Auto|Biography Studies Thirty Years from Here." pp. 1 97.
Predicts that future life writing studies will return to an engagement with tra tional qualities of biography and be more region-specific.

Hamilton, Nigel. "Where Now?" pp. 199–201.
Argues for a more multipronged and interdisciplinary approach to the teaching biography.

Gygax, Franziska. "A Life A Life A Life: Alive! And Retiring from Life Writing?" pp. 203–205.
Suggests that the nature of theoretical reflection on and debates about what "l man" can mean and what a self represents will continue to propel life writing stu ies.

Miller, Nancy K. "A Backward Glance." pp. 207–211.
Predicts that graphic illness memoirs will become prominent within the field.

Jackson, Fatimah L. C. "The Futures of Biohistorical Reconstructions of Clinical Ca from the Cobb Research Laboratory." pp. 213–16.
Argues for an approach integrating different disciplines in the development of b histories.

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gar, Pramod K. "Genomes, or the Book of Life Itself." pp. 217–19.
Predicts that life writing will invest in personal genetic data as a means of unpacking the self.
ch, Marianne. "Debts." pp. 221–23.
Argues that the ghosts of our own past should be mobilized in our work for a more progressive and connective future.
drews, William L. "Caste and Class in Nineteenth-Century Slave Narratives." pp. 225–27.
Argues for more study of how class functioned among the enslaved and how class awareness shaped the views and values of those who published the narratives.
ley, Liz, and Margaretta Jolly. "Epistolarity: Life after Death of the Letter?" pp. 229–33.
Argues that the concept of epistolarity must encompass modes of textual communication released by digital technology and welcome its democratizing elements.
lan, James. "Fictionality." pp. 235–38.
Argues for more analysis of local fictionality in the service of nonfictional purposes.
hards, Page. "Historical and Biographical Lyric." pp. 239–41.
Claims that currently too little attention is paid to the phenomenon of third-person historical and biographical voicing in non-narrative lyric poetry.
sh, Robyn. "Storying the Self: A View on Autobiography from Developmental Psychology." pp. 243–46.
Argues that researchers must consider how stories are shaped by social interactions that privilege certain tellings.
ni, Maria, Orly Lael Netzer, and Emma Maguire. "Collaboration." pp. 247–50.
Comments on how collaboration should inform theoretical and practical approaches to the field as well as reshaping our scholarship and community.
nandez, Kathy-Ann C., Heewon Chang, and Faith W. Ngunjiri. "Collaborative Autoethnography as Multivocal, Relational, and Democratic Research: Opportunities, Challenges, and Aspirations." pp. 251–54.
Argues that CAE holds promise and potential as a critical method for fostering global collaboration that disrupts hegemonic theorizing.
erst, Leah. "The Self as Evidence and Collaborative Identity in Contemporary Autobiographical Documentary." pp. 255–57.
Predicts that documentary filmmakers may make greater use of their personal stories and work more collaboratively.
g, Jing. "The Autobiographical Turn in Representing History in Chinese Films." pp. 259–61.
Discusses films that signal a turn from "auto-ethnography" to "autobiography" in filmic representations of the past.
tti, Anna. "What's Next? Mediation." pp. 263–66.
Expresses the need for closer attention to how mediation and media institutions contribute to the practice of autobiography.
n, John David. "Privacy." pp. 267–70.
Meditates on the fear, desire, power, and vulnerability that constitutes present-day privacy in life writing studies.

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Eakin, Paul John. "Does Autobiography Have a Future?" pp. 271–73.
Remains optimistic about the future of autobiography in the age of the internet

Harley, Alexis. "The Material Turn, Life and Writing." pp. 275–77.
Considers how theories that argue for the dispersal of matter offer an even m radical deconstruction of the autobiographical subject.

Huff, Cynthia. "After Auto, after Bio: Posthumanism and Life Writing." pp. 279–82
Considers how posthumanism would challenge life writing paradigms by consid ing multiple subjectivities from a variety of life forms.

Pearson, Andrew. "Voices from a 'Valley of Dry Bones': Life Narratives of the Sl Trade from St. Helena." pp. 283–87.
Suggests that engagement with the Middle Passage is to negotiate the present, sir the slave trade still thrives in both old and novel forms.

Vasconcellos, Colleen A. "Sally and Molly: Life History, Black Girlhood, and the Futu of the Field." pp. 289–91.
Argues for the importance of enslaved girls' experiences within the burgeoning fi of girlhood studies.

Passeggi, Maria da Conceição. "Autobiographical Narratives in Education." pp. 293–
Reflects on the binomial "autobiographical narrative and education," based on search carried out with children.

Chaney, Michael A. "Autobiographical Graphic 'Novels' of Childhood." pp. 297–30
Argues that self-reflexivity in autobiographical comic books manifests as lesso about how they ought to be read.

Douglas, Kate. "Childhood and Youth." pp. 303–06.
Argues that the field must acknowledge the history of life narratives of childho and youth and work more with life writing texts authored by young people.

Gilmore, Leigh. "Testimony." pp. 307–09.
Urges the field to add feminist witnessing to testimonial networks to combat an Blackness.

Franklin, Cynthia G. "Against Erasures: Why Life-Writing Scholars Should Address t Nakba." pp. 311–14.
Argues for the role life writing scholars can play in ending the erasures and displa ments that define—and also sustain—conditions of Israeli settler colonialism Palestine.

Arias, Arturo. "Víctor Montejo as Example of the Emergence of Indigenous Subjecti ties." pp. 315–18.
Uses Víctor Montejo's *testimonio* to argue that Indigenous autobiographies dif fundamentally from Eurocentric self-representations of the individual self.

Hunsu, Folasade. "The Future of African Women's Autobiography." pp. 319–22.
Suggests that autobiography will continue to be a potent medium for writi against different forms of African women's oppression.

DeBoer-Langworthy, Carol. "Defying the Rules." pp. 323–25.
Reflects on "trends" in life writing studies based on her editorial work.

Kim, Jeong-Hee. "Autobiography as Foucauldian *Askēsis*: Care of the Self and Care Others." pp. 327–29.

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Suggests that autobiography should be practiced as *askēsis*, an act of care of the self and other.

skill, Qwo-Li. "Beading the Sash." pp. 331–34.
Discusses oral history performance as another way to tell stories of Indigenous Two Spirit lives.

n, Rose Mary. "Oral History as Auto/biography through Embodied Performance: A Look at the Narratives of the Early Twentieth Century Afro-Curaçaoan Migrants to Cuba." pp. 335–37.
Argues that we should understand that our future is in reading narratives that cannot be found on pages.

hr-Rohani, Muhammad-Reza. "Institutionalization of Shiite Muslim Life-Writing: The Iranian Historic Experience." pp. 339–41.
Discusses the activities of the Shia Bio-Bibliographical Institute.

key, Michael. "The Futures of Biofiction Studies." pp. 343–46.
Surveys biofiction studies thus far and offers directions for further study.

dell, Kylie. "The Future of Autobiography Studies: The Diary." pp. 347–50.
Suggests that the field will need to account for technologies that create new "affordances" for turning attention to the self as an epistemological object.

cellos, Sergio da Silva. "Brazilian Auto/biographic Voices from Archive Materials." pp. 351–53.
Discusses the use of archival material to critically enrich or to produce narratives of auto/biographical nature.

vet-Käosaar, Leena. "The Archive." pp. 355–58.
Suggests that the archival turn broadens approaches to life writing, revealing and reframing new research methodologies.

boukou, Maria. "The Visual Turn and the Digital Revolution." pp. 359–62.
Reflects upon how the visual shapes theoretical and methodological directions that will open up new vistas for the field.

Eleanor. "Memory, Digital Media, and Life Writing." pp. 363–65.
Contemplates how digital images affect memory and life writing.

mundsdottir, Gunnthorunn. "Future's Memory." pp. 367–69.
Argues that digital memory practices will inevitably influence autobiography, the genre of memory.

ur, Paul Longley. "Data Portraits: Identity, Privacy, and Surveillance." pp. 371–73.
Contemplates the nature of digital identities and who has access to them and for what purposes.

g, Harvey. "Signs of Life." pp. 375–77.
Argues that other forms of social activism that consider and remember Black life will occur.

ser, G. Thomas. "The Future of Life Writing: Body Stories." pp. 379–81.
Speculates that life writing that deals with bodies, such as autosomatography, will gain prominence.

i, Maria, Orly Lael Netzer, and Emma Maguire. "Students and New Scholars: A Conversation." pp. 383–84.

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Discusses how the special issue came to be.

Coletu, Ebony. "Biographic Mediation." pp. 384–85.
Argues that the field must address how life writing functions as an institutic technology.

Lindemann, Sandra. "As-Told-To Life Writing: Narratives of Self and Other." pp. 3 87.
Challenges the field to develop new and innovative ways to uncover "the stor the story."

Barnwell, Ashley. "Life Writing and the Life Course." pp. 387–88.
Argues for a life-course perspective, which could establish collaborative futures tween sociology and auto/biography studies.

Ribeiro, Joana Sousa. "Making the 'Structures' Speak: Migrant Biographies along Tir pp. 388–390.
Takes a life-narrative approach to migration studies to provide new insights i migrants' use of subjectivity, spatiality, and temporality.

Winder, Alex. "Cartography." pp. 390–91.
Argues for new acts of cartography, which can produce new ways of thinking ab selfhood and new objects of auto/biographical inquiry.

Pryor, Melanie. "Eco-Autobiography: Writing Self through Place." pp. 391–93.
Claims that eco-autobiography offers a hybrid writing form that renders plac that which creates and is created through autographical acts.

Fongang, Delphine. "Autobiography's *Other*: The Untold Life Narratives from sub-Saha Africa." pp. 393–94.
Argues that African modes of self-representation project the multiple subjectivi of African identity and provide new ways of reading life writing.

Rasmussen, Lucinda. "Indigenizing Auto|Biography Studies in Pursuit of Inclu Classrooms." pp. 395–96.
Contemplates the role that auto/biography plays in the decolonized classroom how auto/biography scholars can prioritize collaboration with Indigenous peo in ways that can benefit all students.

Shickluna, Dawn. "Trauma Texts in | as Revolutionary Praxis." pp. 396–98.
Argues that an interdisciplinary approach to revolutionary struggle pushes boundaries of auto/biography studies, pedagogy, and feminism.

Snooks, Gina. "Trauma, Testimony, and the Art of Therapeutic Portraiture." pp. 3 400.
Shows how autobiographical portraiture aligns with movements in autobiograph discourse that aim to elucidate the importance of self-representation and how periences are embodied.

Spallacci, Amanda. "Images, Affect, and Activism: The Affect Generated by Persc Testimonies of Sexual Violence in Autobiographical Film." pp. 400–402.
Calls for an exploration of the limitations and nuances of autobiographical film site capable of raising ethical and political concerns such as sexual violence.

O'Rourke, Marie. "'Moments and Lustres': Writing Memoir through Lyric Essay." 402–03.
Claims that the lyric essay embodies the nature of identity pieced together thro recollection and language.

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utler, Stephanie E. "Correspondence, Peer Support, and Wellness: The Influence of Life Writing on Mental Health." pp. 404–06.
Calls for interdisciplinary analysis of the therapeutic benefits of personal correspondence across different media and contexts.

ung, Jessica Siu-yin. "Remaking Obscure Lives as Prosopography in Blogazine." pp. 406–07.
Suggests that prosopography allows us to trace collective practices of life writing as they evolve in digital forms.

orvat, Ana. "What's Next for Trans Life Writing?" pp. 408–09.
Argues that trans can show auto/biography studies how to take account of the plurality of gender identities and embodiments.

nnedy, Ümit. "The Vulnerability of Contemporary Digital Autobiography." pp. 409–11.
Contemplates contemporary digital autobiography and how these texts are created in and by specific online communities.

berts, Krista. "Digital Archives, Text Encoding Initiative, and Relationality: Locating Digital Life Writing | Writing to the Future." pp. 411–13.
Calls for an investigation of the metadata persons and machines leave behind and how we can account for these posthuman collaborations.

tchison, Jesse. "Rethinking Relationality." pp. 413–14.
Argues for a reconsideration of how relationality, as one of several models of self-construction available to memoirists writing about others, can transform life writing criticism.

cDowell, Felice. "Fashioning a Life: Exploring How Fashion Literature Fashions the Self." pp. 414–16.
Argues that an understanding of how acts of reading and writing auto/biographically engage practices of *fashioning life* that can interrogate notions of surface and depth in the performance of selfhood.

uyen, Tram. "Asian American Cookbooks as Autobiographies." pp. 416–18.
Argues that cookbooks are autobiographical gestures that may masquerade as post-identity pluralism while centralizing a masculinist culinary and cultural aesthetic.

, vol. 32, no. 3, 2017, "Excavating Lives."

dromou, Amy-Katerini, and Nicoletta Demetriou. "Introduction: Unearthing Objects, Discovering Stories, and Retelling Lives." pp. 459–71.
Reflects on discovering hidden stories and unearthing lost objects, along with other topics of this special issue.

tin, Fethiye. "Biography: The Echo of Those Who Have Lost Their Voice?" Translated by Oya Akın and Kathy Stephanides. pp. 473–78.
Relates her grandmother's survival of the Armenian Genocide.

k, Julie. "Radical Connections: Genealogy, Small Lives, Big Data." pp. 479–97.
Considers the monetization of genealogical research, its relationship to ideas about DNA, and its radical potential as a kinship practice.

rdell, Kylie. "Modern Memory Making: Marie Kondo, Self-Help Journaling, and the Excavation, Curation, and Control of Personal Digital Data." pp. 499–517.

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Analyzes the Australian commercial journaling website touted as the "mod school of memory," *Life: Captured, Inc.*

Huang, Xin. "Excavating Gendered Self: Digital Affordance and Photo Auto/Biog phy." pp. 519–39.
Examines the creation of digital photo archives and the fashioning of new genres ordinary Chinese women.

Michael, Olga. "Excavating Childhood: Fairy Tales, Monsters, and Abuse Survival Lynda Barry's *What It Is*." pp. 541–66.
Argues that comics complicate the life narrative and allow the feminist reconfigu tion of the monstrous mother of Western psychoanalysis and art.

Oğurlu, Anita. "Learning from Lilo Linke: Unearthing Her Authentic Autobiograph for an Emancipatory Pedagogy." pp. 567–85.
Uncovers Linke's autobiographies and her work for social justice.

García, Ana Belén Martínez. "Unearthing the Past: Bringing Ideological Indoctrinati to Light in North Korean Girls' Memoirs." pp. 587–602.
Explores three girls' memoirs of childhood, state violence, and emergence as e powered agents.

Hornung, Alfred. "Out of Life: Routes, Refuge, Rescue." pp. 603–23.
Analyzes "out-of-life narratives" by Jack London, Jerry Ellis, present-day Balk route migrants, and other stories of escape.

Brant, Clare, Tobias Heinrich, and Monica Soeting. "Introduction by Editors: 'The Placing of Displaced Lives: Refugee Narratives.'" pp. 625–28.
Introduces the urgent sociopolitical context of this forum of essays and discusses t subjectivity of the refugee.

Cati, Alice, and Maria Francesca Piredda. "Among Drowned Lives: Digital Archives a Migrant Memories in the Age of Transmediality." pp. 628–37.
Examines digital storytelling resources *Sciabica* and *Archivio delle Memorie Migra*

Lechner, Elsa. "Narratives In/With and Beyond Borders: Constraints and Potentialit of Biographical Research with Refugees." pp. 637–43.
Argues that biographical research can contribute to transformative dialogue b tween refugees and hosts.

Lo, Aline. "Fanciful Flights: Re-imagining Refugee Narratives of Escape in Kao Ka Yang's *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*." pp. 643–48.
Analyzes Yang's use of fictional counternarrative in an autobiography of refug trauma.

Rifkind, Candida. "Refugee Comics and Migrant Topographies." pp. 648–54.
Draws attention to a subgenre of refugee comics and their interventions into p ceptions of refugees.

Lenart-Cheng, Helga. "Mapping Lives Across Borders." pp. 654–59.
Examines online representations of refugee lives and journeys.

Paynter, Eleanor. "Autobiographical Docudrama as Testimony: Jonas Carpignano's *Me iterranea*." pp. 659–66.
Considers the asylum court and other charged discursive contexts of refugee l writing.

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dar, David. "The Ungrateful Child Refugee: The Anti-sensationalism of Lore Segal's *Other People's Houses*." pp. 667–72.
Analyzes Segal's resistance to sensationalism.
more, Leigh. "Refugee/Citizen: Chiasmus and Testimony from Frederick Douglass to Hurricane Katrina." pp. 673–81.
Calls upon traditions of Black life writing and agency to highlight the precarity of Black life and the political consequences of being called "refugees."
rdman, Kathleen. "Sites of Identity: Teaching Memoir and Place." pp. 683–92.
Reflects on the benefits and challenges of teaching life writing by focusing on memoir and place.
kin, Jeremy D. "History, Historians, and Autobiography Revisited." pp. 693–98.
Reflects on changes in the field of life writing and the genre of historians' autobiographies.

rafiя, vol. 5, 2016, "Scholarly Insights into the Biography of the Writer," guest ed- by Aleksey Kholikov.
veller, Claudia, and Andrea Gullotta. "Introduction." pp. 5–8.
Reviews this special issue as well as a brief overview of "biography" in Russian scholarship.
olikov, Aleksey. "Исследовательские аспекты биографии писателя: вместо едисловия." pp. 13–15.
Introduction to the special issue.
dkova, Violetta. "Населяя историю людьми: биографический метод как струмент гуманитарной науки." pp. 17–37.
Shows how biographies of Bulgakov, Olesha, and other writers can be a fundamental tool of analysis of the anthropological turn that occurred with the birth of the Soviet state.
pa, Valerii. "Стратегии писательской биографии (на материале жизнеописаний А.П. Чехова)." pp. 39–53.
Compares biographies of Chekhov to identify specific generic strategies.
danova, Ol'ga. "Новое звено в биографике Ф.М. Достоевского." pp. 55–73.
Discusses her work on the biography of Dostoevsky written by Georgii Chulkov in 1935 and published in 2015, within the historical context of the 1917 revolution.
orel'skaia, Elena. "Биография Исаака Бабеля: мифы и реальность." pp. 75–94.
Discusses the difficulties of a biographer who deals with endangered or limited sources, using the example of Babel.
lygina, Nina. "Роль Бориса Пильняка в писательской биографии Андрея атонова." pp. 95–115.
Reveals new findings on the relationship between the writers Platonov and Pil'niak.
intlinger, Angela. "Biography as an Oratorical Genre." pp. 153–71.
Reflects on her experience as a Russian biography scholar, teacher, and blogger.

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Kostioukovitch, Elena. "О фактологии и фантазийности в структуре 'автоби графического' нарратива." pp. 173–87.

Explains intriguing autobiographical and biographical aspects of her novel *Zwing*

Biography, vol. 40, no. 1, 2017, "Caste and Life Narratives," guest edited by S. Shankar a Charu Gupta.

Shankar, S., and Charu Gupta. "'My Birth Is My Fatal Accident': Introduction to Ca and Life Narratives." pp. 1–15.

Maps the convergence of Critical Caste Studies, Dalit Studies, and life writing fie together in this special issue. This special issue is dedicated to Rohith Vemula Dalit PhD student who committed suicide in 2016.

Gupta, Charu. "Speaking Self, Writing Caste: Recovering the Life of Santram BA." 16–43.

Revisits the contributions of Santram BA to caste reform, particularly his focus intercaste marriage and intimacy.

Basu, Tapan. "The Dalit Personal Narrative In Hindi: Reflections on a Long Liter Lineage." pp. 44–63.

Tracks the history of genre and print culture of the Dalit personal narrative, w attention to Swami Achhutanand.

Muthukkaruppan, Parthasarathi. "Tamil Dalit Literature: Aesthetics, Politics, and L Narratives." pp. 64–76.

Builds historical context around ideas of identity and aesthetics in Dalit literat in the vernacular.

Brueck, Laura R. "Bending Biography: The Creative Intrusions of 'Real Lives' in D Fiction." pp. 77–92.

Analyzes work of Uday Prakash and Ajay Navaria through a postrealism lens, notice metafictional narrative techniques.

Eswaran, Swarnavel. "*Periyar* as a Biopic: Star Persona, Historical Events, and Politic pp. 93–115.

Analyzes how history is represented through the life of a revolutionary radical lead

Menon, Bindu. "Affective Returns: Biopics as Life Narratives." pp. 116–39.

Examines the impact of an event of caste violence in early twentieth-century T vancore, and the role of cinema as a counterarchive.

Alone, Y. S. "Caste Life Narratives, Visual Representation, and Protected Ignoranc pp. 140–69.

Interrogates pictorial representations of caste life experiences using the criti framework of "protected ignorance."

Paik, Shailaja. "Mangala Bansode and the Social Life of Tamasha: Caste, Sexuality, a Discrimination in Modern Maharashtra." pp. 170–98.

Deploys oral history to explore struggle for survival in women's folk performar and theater.

Sharma, Mukul. "Brahmanical Activism as Eco-Casteism: Reading the Life Narrati of Bindeshwar Pathak, Sulabh International, and 'Liberated' Dalits." pp. 199–22

Traces the limits of Pathak and his environmental movement's use of caste a

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Dalits to reform Brahmanical Hinduism.

dh, Sumit. "Invisibility of 'Other' Dalits and Silence in the Law." pp. 222–43.
Examines overlapping vulnerabilities and legal legibility in contemporary transgender Dalit lives.

ar, Shweta Majumdar, and Anjana Narayan. "Stories of Dalit Diaspora: Migration, Life Narratives, and Caste in the US." pp. 244–64.
Explores caste and casteism in the South Asian American life writing of three Dalit activists in the US.

rdon, June A. "Caste in Japan: The Burakumin." pp. 265–87.
Focuses on teachers and scholars who work with Burakumin youth and educate the larger society of Japan about this caste system.

, vol. 40, no. 4, 2017, "International Year in Review," edited by John David Zuern.
rviews of publications in autobiography, memoir, biography, and other forms of life from 2016–2017 from Australia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Colombia, Finland, France, Iceland, India, Italy, Korea, México, the Netherlands, Poland, Romouth Africa, Spain, the UK, and the US.

adian Historical Review, vol. 98, no. 2, 2017, "Historical Perspectives: Confederaa, Biography, and Canadian History," edited by Dimitry Anastakis and Mary-Ellen m, editors.

stakis, Dimitry, and Mary-Ellen Kelm. "Confederation, Biography, and Canadian History." pp. 294–95.
Explains how the feature examines another aspect of historical writing that historiographically has been central to framing our understanding of Confederation: biography.

k, Michel. "De la pertinence historiographique d'une trajectoire individuelle: Lionel Groulx, la Confédération et le Canada français." pp. 297–320.
Argues for the relevance of studying Lionel Groulx's stance on Confederation as a prominent French-Canadian nationalist thinker.

, Adele. "Beyond Biography, Beyond Canada." pp. 321–37.
Argues that historians need to go beyond biography and Confederation to consider more complicated ways of engaging individual lives and nation states.

ght, Donald. "His *Macdonald, My Creighton*, Biography, and the Writing of History." pp. 338–55.
Reflects on the relationship between biographers and their subjects and considers the utility of biography to the writing of history.

son, Carmen. "A Much-Fathered Nation: Feminist Biography and Confederation Politics." pp. 356–74.
Considers how dividing political (men's) history and gender (women's) history into separate domains has affected how biographers have written about Confederation.

, Ricia Anne, editor. *Auto/Biography Across the Americas: Transnational Themes in Life*

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Writing. Routledge, 2017.

Chansky, Ricia Anne. "Introduction: Reading beyond Borders—Movement and longing in the Americas." pp. 1–19.

Explores the impact of border crossings and migration on North and Latin American life writing scholarship and identities. Also discusses this volume's connection to the 2013 IABA Americas conference in Puerto Rico.

Smith, Sidonie. "Timescapes, Backpacks, Networks: Writing Lives Across the Americ pp. 20–37.

Points to the secondary witnessing of transnational movements, drawing on *Sta Exception*, an archaeological and ethnographic exhibit on the objects and lives behind in crossing the US border.

Arfuch, Leonor. "Art, Identity, and Narration: Autobiographical Quests beyond tional Limits." pp. 38–53.

Examines traveling art exhibitions in Argentina and how the volatility of an a biographical act may allow readers/viewers to participate in the narrative.

Rak, Julie. "A Transnational Autobiographical Pact: The *Canada Reads* 2012 Con versy." pp. 54–72.

Describes how controversy about recent immigration and national belonging en ed in a popular memoir book reading program.

Chansky, Ricia Anne. "Between Nations, Between Selves: Intertextuality and Diasp Identity in Jamaica Kincaid's *Among Flowers*." pp. 73–89.

Compares work by Kincaid to locate the diasporic self between texts rather tha a single autobiographical act.

Necoechea Gracia, Gerardo. "Talking beyond Borders: Oral Histories of Becoming litically Left in Latin America, 1960–1990." pp. 90–111.

Examines individuals' initiations into political organizations, locating the pers within national and transnational movements of radicalization.

Paquet, Sandra Pouchet. "The Mediated Self in the Contested Domain of Caribb Autobiography." pp. 112–26.

Traces an aesthetic relationality through the works of several prominent Caribb life writers to identify an intricate intertwine of history, space, and life.

Beard, Laura J. "Mapping Out a Treacherous Terrain: Working at the Crossroads of tobiographical Studies and Inter-American Literary Studies." pp. 127–41.

Looks at bilingual Cree texts from Canada to argue that a recognition of lite and rhetorical sovereignty means that we do not impose critical terms from o cultural traditions in our readings of Indigenous texts.

Karpinski, Eva C. "Decolonial Translation in Embodied Auto/Biographical Indiger Performance: Monique Mojica's *Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way*." pp. 1 63.

Analyzes performance as a site of decoloniality that regrounds actors in Indiger epistemologies.

Allen, Rose Mary. "'See how I talk about the slavemaster': Searching for 'We' in A Curaçaoan Oral Histories." pp. 164–82.

Analyzes slave work songs that reveal relationality and subjectivity of enslaved p ples.

Andrews, William L. "Class and Class Awareness in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave G*

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pp. 183–97.
Examines the impact of class status on interracial relationships between Black and white women.

arcellos, Sergio da Silva. "The Paradoxical Demand for Realism: Building National Identity in Brazilian Literatures." pp. 198–215.
Looks to diaries and other colonial literatures for insight into the power of realism and authenticity in creating Brazilian national identity.

uff, Cynthia. "'Forward!': National Identity, Animalographies, and the Ethics of Representation in the Posthuman Imaginary." pp. 216–36.
Relates a history of movement and conquest to narratives of overcoming in contemporary US memoir.

sky, Ricia Anne, and Emily Hipchen, editors. *The Routledge Auto/Biography Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2016.
A collection of key theoretical essays on life writing from the past thirty years, divided into three sections: foundations, transformations, and futures. Essays by James Olney, Georg Misch, Georges Gusdorf, Paul de Man, Philippe Lejeune, Timothy Dow Adams, Eugene Stelzig, Arnold Krupat, William L. Andrews, Magdalena Maíz Peña and Luis H. Peña, Sidonie Smith, Marlene Kadar, G. Thomas Couser, Lois W. Banner, Julia Watson, Martin Danahay, Susannah B. Mintz, Harvey Young, Jack/Judith Halberstam, Leigh Gilmore, Arturo Arias, Alison Ravenscroft, Helen M. Buss, Alfred Hornung, Isabelle de Courtivron, Margaretta Jolly and Liz Stanley, Julie Rak, Gillian Whitlock, Paul John Eakin, Charles Altieri, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Faith Wambura Ngunjiri, Kathy-Ann C. Hernandez, Heewon Chang, Hubert Zapf, Cynthia Huff and Joel Haefner, Folasade Hunsu, Leonor Arfuch, Nancy K. Miller, Marianne Hirsch, Hillary Chute, Paul Longley Arthur, Elizabeth Podnicks, Lisa Nakamura, Susanna Egan, and Arnaud Schmitt.

hansky, Ricia Anne. "General Introduction." pp. xx–xxii.
Discusses this reader's relationship to the journal *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*.

hansky, Ricia Anne. "Foundations Introduction." pp. 1–4.
Reviews a first wave of life writing scholarship and its work to establish life writing as an independent field of study, especially in relation to literature and history.

hansky, Ricia Anne. "Transformations Introduction." pp. 117–22.
Reviews a second wave of life writing scholarship that explores agency, ethics, and the definition of text.

hansky, Ricia Anne. "Futures Introduction." pp. 229–33.
Reviews a range of twenty-first-century life writing scholarship and the impact scholarship is having on lives.

Ionica, editor. *To Be Indio in Colonial Spanish America*. U of New Mexico P, 2017.

az, Monica. "*Indio* Identities in Colonial Spanish America." pp. 1–28.
Focuses on creative identity strategies and negotiations of Indigenous peoples within and against colonial systems.

orno, Rolena. "Artifact, Artifice, and Identity: Nativist Writing and Scholarship on Colonial Latin America and Their Legacies." pp. 31–54.
Examines the role of identity and collaboration in recording histories of colonial

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Peru and Mexico.

Van Deusen, Nancy E. "Holograms of the Voiceless: Indian Slavery and Servitude Early Colonial Lima, Peru." pp. 55–92.
Reconstructs holograms of servant and slave lives in urban Lima from histori fragments.

O'Toole, Rachel Sarah. "Mobilizing Muleteer Indigeneity in the Markets of Colo Peru." pp. 95–121.
Argues that identity was a crucial part of economic activity for coastal Andean m leteers bridging rural and urban spaces.

Seijas, Tatiana. "*Indios Chinos* in Eighteenth-Century Mexico." pp. 123–41.
Analyzes legal documents to explore the fluid identity creation of Filipino im grants to Mexico and the ways they were disciplined by the colonial state.

Brian, Amber. "Shifting Identities: Mestizo Historiography and the Representation Chichimecs." pp. 143–66.
Argues that Muñoz Camargo and Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's histories complicate mes identity and representation of Indian governance and politics.

Balsera, Viviana Díaz. "Voicing Mesoamerican Identities on the Roads of Empire: A cón and the *Nahuaaltocaitl* in Seventeeneth-Century Mexico." pp. 169–89.
Reads incantations for how Indigenous colonial subjects mobilized the supernatu in their everyday lives.

Quispe-Agnoli, Rocío. "The Indigenous Sacred as Evil Otherness in Early Colonial A des." pp. 191–216.
Confronts early modern European perceptions and translations with Indigen responses.

Schroeder, Susan. "Writing the Nahuatl Canon: Ethnicity, Identity, and Posterity cording to Chimalpahin." pp. 219–41.
Reviews the great contributions of Indigenous seventeenth-century histor Chimalpahin.

Loaeza, Pablo García. "Fernando de Alva Ixtilxóchitl: A New Native Identity." pp. 243–
Considers Alva Ixtilxóchitl's shifting persona as integral to understanding natio notions of identity in Mexico.

Yannakakis, Yanna. "Afterword." pp. 267–70.
Highlights the contributions of this collection and complex networks of Indigen identities.

Fassin, Didier, editor. *If Truth Be Told: The Politics of Public Ethnography*. Duke UP, 2017.

Fassin, Didier. "Introduction: When Ethnography Goes Public." pp. 1–16.
Explains the value of focusing on the publicization of ethnography, and the abil of ethnography to produce truths.

Coleman, Gabriella. "Gopher, Translator, and Trickster: The Ethnographer and the M dia." pp. 19–46.
Reflects on her efforts to explain and rehabilitate simplified representations of ha ers such as Anonymous to journalists.

Hage, Ghassan. "What Is a Public Intervention?: Speaking Truth to the Oppressed."

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47–68.
Reflects on a lecture given in Palestine to debate the role of the intellectual to confirm the audience's beliefs or affirm new ideas of resistance.

espie, Kelly. "Before the Commission: Ethnography as Public Testimony." pp. 69–95.
Analyzes her own testimony in a police brutality case in South Africa and offers ethnographic work to complicate the historical source of violence in poor neighborhoods and policing efforts.

nha, Manuela Ivone. "Addressing Policy-Oriented Audiences: Relevance and Persuasiveness." pp. 96–118.
Compares two cases of independent ethnography becoming relevant for policies around drug laws and vaccine acceptability.

eburg, Federico. "Serendipitous Involvement: Making Peace in the Geto." pp. 119–37.
Shares an example of research needing to become directly involved in resolving conflict, deepening an understanding of war and peace in Haiti.

ssire, Lucas. "Tactical versus Critical: Indigenizing Public Ethnography." pp. 138–59.
Compares the tensions between two public ethnographies both supportive of the Ayoreo Indians, focusing on issues of authority and representation.

nthall, Jonathan. "Experto Crede?: A Legal and Political Conundrum." pp. 160–183.
Discusses what happens to ethnographies and other research brought into court for cases on Palestine and terrorism.

bois, Vincent. "Policy Ethnography as a Combat Sport: Analyzing the Welfare State against the Grain." pp. 184–204.
Offers martial arts as a model for ethnographic engagement with policy.

El-Haj, Nadia. "Academic Freedom at Risk: The Occasional Worldliness of Scholarly Texts." pp. 205–227.
Relates the attack by Zionist scholars and networks on an ethnographer's work on Israeli archaeological practices in Palestine.

kan, Unni. "Perils and Prospects of Going Public: Between Academia and Real Life." pp. 228–60.
Discusses the challenges of critical scholarship about the relationship between Muslim migrants and their host national communities in Europe.

hl, João. "Ethnography Prosecuted: Facing the Fabulation of Power." pp. 261–86.
Confronts critique fueled by nationalism after his study revealed problems in healthcare in Brazil.

ndy, Sherine. "How Publics Shape Ethnographers: Translating across Divided Audiences." pp. 287–310.
Meditates on debates in medicine, religion, and health between Egyptian and North American scholars over her study on organ transplantation.

sin, Didier. "Epilogue: The Public Afterlife of Ethnography." pp. 311–44.
Illustrates a wide variety of ethnography's public encounters and its various responsibilities.

Valentina, Alison Lewis, and Corina L. Petrescu, editors. *Secret Police Files from the*

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Eastern Bloc: Between Surveillance and Life Writing. Boydell & Brewer, 2016.

Glajar, Valentina, Alison Lewis, and Corina L. Petrescu. "Introduction." 1–23.

Reviews the history of the late-twentieth-century opening of secret-police archives in Germany, Romania, and Hungary, and the different purposes th texts can serve.

Lewis, Alison. "The Secret Lives and Files of Stasi Collaborators: Reading Secret I lice Files for Identity and Habitus." pp. 27–55.

Examines the files of Paul Wiens, Sascha Andersen, and Maja Wiens to argue the importance of reading the Stasi files as life writing texts.

Glajar, Valentina. "'You'll Never Make a Spy Out of Me': The File Story of 'Fink sanne.'" pp. 56–83.

Explores the complexity of collaboration by reconstructing a life narrative fr fragmentary police and informer files.

Petrescu, Corina L. "Witness for the Prosecution: Eginald Schlattner in the Files of Securitate." pp. 84–111.

Explores the transformation of a Transylvanian Saxon writer into a witness for prosecution and against his peers in the German Writers' Trial.

Ring, Annie. "Collaboration as Collapse in the Life Writing and Stasi Shadow-Docume of Monika Maron and Christa Wolf." pp. 116–136.

Coreads files with literary works to examine the sovereignty and agency of th subjects.

Costabile-Heming, Carole Anne. "Perpetrator as Victim in Jana Döhring's *Stasirau* pp. 137–49.

Examines Döhring's autobiographical novel's successes and limitations in buildi a counter-narrative for a Stasi informant.

Szucs, Aniko. "Before 'It Gets All Wiped Out': Document-Affect and History-Effect the Hungarian Performance *Apaches on the Danube*." pp. 153–77.

Analyzes a play that both draws on and fictionalizes the archive for insight abc affective truth and its role in creating personal connections with history.

Garde, Ulrike. "The Stasi Files on Center Stage: Life Writing, Witnessing, and Memc in Recent Performance." pp. 178–200.

Focuses on contemporary public performances that involved performers direc impacted by the surveillance, emphasizing effects on aesthetics, witnessing, a public memory.

Komska, Yuliya. "Surveillance and the Senses in a Documentary Portrait of Radio F Europe." pp. 201–228.

Analyzes RFE's on-screen biography *Cold Waves* to draw parallels between RFE a the Soviet secret police agencies as media makers.

Gems, Gerald R., editor. *Before Jackie Robinson: The Transcendent Role of Black Sporting P neers*. U of Nebraska P, 2017.

Gems, Gerald R. "Introduction." pp. 1–16.

Reviews the book's focus on reclaiming Black social-change heroes in late nir teenth- and early twentieth-century American sports.

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Daniels III, Pellom. "Like a Comet Across the Heavens: Isaac Burns Murphy, Horseracing, and the Age of American Exceptionalism." pp. 17–39.
Discusses Murphy's contentious rise to greatness as a jockey post-Civil War.

leberry, Sarah Jane. "John M. Shippen Jr.: Testing the Front Nine of American Golf." pp. 41–65.
Contextualizes changing ideas of leisure and labor during the life of the first African American tournament golfer.

ms, Gerald R. "When Great Wasn't Good Enough: Sam Ransom's Journey from Athlete to Activist." pp. 67–87.
Discusses the motivation for Black athletes to organize for civil rights within the sporting world during the early twentieth century.

max, Michael E. "A League of Their Own: Rube Foster's 'Pitfalls of Baseball' Revisited." pp. 89–112.
Analyzes the entrepreneurial and economic efforts that led to the formation of the Negro National League.

s, Bieke. "Bessie Coleman: 'The Only Race Aviatrix in the World.'" pp. 113–38.
Recognizes the success of this overlooked contemporary to Amelia Earhart and Coleman's advocacy for "racial uplift" as the first African American woman pilot.

enkirk, James E. "Sol Butler: The Fleeting Fame of a World-Class Black Athlete." pp. 139–54.
Analyzes the reasons this Olympian athlete fell into obscurity during the Jim Crow era.

l, Susan J. "Robert L. 'Bob' Douglas: 'Aristocracy on the Court, an Architect of Men.'" pp. 155–77.
Honors Douglas's contributions as owner and manager of the New York Renaissance to the professionalism of Black basketball.

ter, Robert. "Isadore Channels: The Recovered Life of a Great African American Sports Star." pp. 179–203.
Recovers personal life information alongside career information to create a fuller biography for this tennis player.

son, Murray. "Tommy Brookins: Pioneer in Two Worlds." pp. 205–35.
Highlights Brookins's trailblazing in basketball (with the Harlem Globetrotters), jazz, and comedy.

ter, Robert. "Tidye Pickett: The Unfulfilled Aspirations of America's Pioneering African American Female Track Star." pp. 237–61.
Focuses on Pickett's accomplishments despite racism faced as an Olympian in the 1930s, a decade after African American men began to appear on US Olympic teams.

tes, James. "Harold 'Killer' Johnson: Making a Career in the Popular Culture." pp. 263–78.
Celebrates Johnson's unheralded success in many interlocking aspects of the sports and entertainment industries in early twentieth-century Chicago.

midt, Raymond. "Continuing the Struggle: Teddy Rhodes and Professional Golf." pp. 279–304.
Reveals continuing racist segregation in the Professional Golfers' Association of America decades after integration in other major sports.

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Halldórsdóttir, Erla Hulda, Tiina Kinnunen, Maarit Leskelä-Kärki, and Birgitte Poss editors. *Biography, Gender and History: Nordic Perspectives*. K&H, 2017.

Halldórsdóttir, Erla Hulda, Tiina Kinnunen, Maarit Leskelä-Kärki. "Doing Biograp pp. 7–36.

Reflects on the biographical turn in Nordic and international scholarship over last three decades with a focus on the relationship between historical biography historical scholarship.

Possing, Birgitte. "How Does One Relate a Complex Life?: Reflections on a Polyph Portrait of the Minister and Intellectual Bodil Koch (1903–1973)." pp. 37–60.

Discusses the challenges of writing a polyphonic biography of a public life portraying the true story of an individual.

Wetterberg, Christina Carlsson. "Biography as a Way of Challenging Gender Ste types: Reflections on Writing about the Swedish Author and Feminist Frida St hoff (1865–1945)." pp. 61–80.

Cautions against the narrative of victimhood when writing from a feminist perspec

Halldórsdóttir, Erla Hulda. "A Biography of Her Own: The Historical Narrative Sigríður Pálsdóttir (1809–1871)." pp. 81–100.

Argues that ordinary lives, as opposed to lives seen as representative of larger gr of women, still lack attention within the field.

Harmainen, Antti. "Group Biography as an Approach to Studying Manhood and I gion in Late Nineteenth-Century Finland." pp. 101–20.

Discusses empathy and other characteristics of modern masculinity emergin relation to alternative religious beliefs.

Kjærsgaard, Kristine. "Love and Emotions in the Diplomatic World: The Relation Between Bodil Begtrup's Public and Private Lives, 1937–1956." pp. 121–42.

Demonstrates the impossibility to separate the public from the private in biogra cal study.

Kinnunen, Tiina. "'Fighting Sisters': A Comparative Biography of Ellen Key (18 1926) and Alexandra Gripenberg (1857–1913) in the Contested Field of Europ Feminisms." pp. 143–64.

Combines a biographical and microhistorical approach to analyze ideological troversies in a broader historical context.

Andersson, Irene. "Telling Stories of Gendered Space and Place: The Political Agenc the Swedish Communist Valborg Svensson (1903–1983)." pp. 165–86.

Explores the divergent life narratives about the same person that disparate poli sources can present.

Leskelä-Kärki, Maarit. "Remembering Mother: Relations and Memory in the Biogra ical Project on Minna Krohn (1841–1917)." pp. 187–208.

Discusses relational identity and relationality as an ethical issue between the b rapher and her subject.

Hakosalo, Heini. "Coming Together: Early Finnish Medical Women and the Mult Levels of Historical Biography." pp. 209–30.

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Asks how a biographer can combine different approaches when studying several individuals and discusses the specific insights of group biography.

hkalahti, Kaisa. "Bad Girl Biographies: Child Welfare Documents as Gendered Biographies." pp. 231–50.

Examines how state processes produce certain kinds of knowledge and how these biographies were used to define and interpret improper behavior.

innunen, Tiina, Maarit Leskelä-Kärki, Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir, and Birgitte Possing. "Afterword: Future Challenges." pp. 251–64.

Discusses future directions in terms of interdisciplinarity, relationality and ethics, transnational history, and biography as a tool to combine micro and macro.

, Eric D., editor. *Reading African American Autobiography: Twenty-First-Century Contexts and Criticisms*. U of Wisconsin P, 2017.

more, Eric D. "Introduction: African American Autobiography in the 'Age of Obama.'" pp. 3–18.

Discusses African American life writing in the "age of Obama."

smier-Paz, Lynn A. "'A Dying Man': The Outlaw Body of Arthur, 1768." pp. 19–40.

Identifies the significance of the body and clothing to highlight shifts in the politics of slavery and abolition in Massachusetts.

body, Jocelyn K. "Early Black Men's Spiritual Autobiography: Marriage and Violence." pp. 41–65.

Argues that the relationship among masculinity, theology, and power continues to challenge the thinking of contemporary African Americans.

more, Eric D. "Olaudah Equiano in the United States: Abigail Mott's 1829 Abridged Edition of the *Interesting Narrative*." pp. 66–88.

Uncovers how different readers in different time periods engaged with different editions of Equiano's autobiography.

, Anthony S. "The Visual Properties of Black Autobiography: The Case of William J. Edwards." pp. 89–116.

Argues for the significance of photos in postbellum African American life writing that doesn't portray strategically posed life writers.

rish, Susan Scott. "Richard Wright's Environments: Mediating Personhood through the South's Second Nature." pp. 117–44.

An ecocritical reading of Wright that problematizes the term "environment" while challenging the idea that urban spaces gave Wright his critical edge.

mins, Brian. "'A Space of Concentration': The Autobiographical Comics of Richard 'Grass' Green and Samuel R. Delany." pp. 145–73.

Argues that the work of Green and Delany communicate the psychological density of casual yet significant urban encounters.

rtis, Tracy. "Born into This Body: Black Women's Use of Buddhism in Autobiographical Narratives." pp. 174–95.

Argues that the study of African American spiritual autobiography must expand beyond Western religious traditions.

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Selzer, Linda Furgerson. "From Blog to Books: Angela Nissel, Authorship, and the Di tal Public Sphere." pp. 196–215.
Argues that the rise of digital platforms has created new ways to fashion the self African American life writing.

Fedosik, Marina. "Grafted Belongings: Identification in Autobiographical Narratives African American Transracial Adoptees." pp. 216–31.
Demonstrates that the self of the transracial adoptee can be found in both priv and public histories.

Dreher, Kwakiutl L. "Reading Signs of Crazy: Pam Grier, a Black Feminist in Prax pp. 232–58.
Analyzes Grier's negotiation of "craziness" to maintain her sense of self and comm ment to Black feminism.

Life Writing, vol. 14, no. 2, 2017, "Writing Lives Together: Romantic and Victorian Au Biography."

James, Felicity, and Julian North. "Writing Lives Together: Romantic and Victor Auto/Biography." pp. 133–38.
Introduces the special issue and places the contributions in their historical conte

Sangster, Matthew. "Coherence and Inclusion in the Life Writing of Romantic-peri London." pp. 141–53.
Explores the ways in which London lives were written together during the Rom tic period, considering representations across different genres and media.

North, Julian. "Intertextual Sociability in Victorian Lives of the Romantic Poets: Tho as De Quincey's 'Lake Reminiscences' and Edward John Trelawny's *Recollection the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*." pp. 155–69.
Explores the ways in which literary biographers have made intertextual allusi to the work of their subjects as a means of reconstituting lost personal and creat relationships.

Styler, Rebecca. "Josephine Butler's Serial Auto/Biography: Writing the Changing S through the Lives of Others." pp. 171–84.
Shows Butler's change from positioning her public work within the reform tra tion of liberalism to that of apocalyptic feminism.

James, Felicity. "Writing the Lives of Dissent: Life Writing, Religion and Commun from Edmund Calamy to Elizabeth Gaskell." pp. 185–97.
Explores the collaborative life writing of communities across time, specifically t religious groupings of Rational Dissent as Unitarianism gradually emerged.

Rees, Kathy. "Life Writing by the Gosse Family: Family Portraits in Scientific, Evang cal and Auto/biographical Discourses." pp. 199–215.
Argues that the radical qualities of *Father and Son* were forged from Gosse's po tion of being influenced by, and at the same time resistant to, a network of fam memoirs.

Rose, Lucy Ella. "The Diaries of Mary Seton Watts (1849–1938): A Record of Her Co jugal Creative Partnership with 'England's Michelangelo', George Frederic Wa (1817–1904)." pp. 217–31.

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Explores the Wattses' conjugal creative partnership through a reading of Mary's diaries covering their marital years, offering insight into their relationship and challenging traditional perceptions of Mary as George's peripheral, submissive wife.

pancioni, Claudia. "Janet Ross's Intergenerational Life Writing: Female Intellectual Legacy through Memoirs, Correspondence, and Reminiscences." pp. 233–44.
Examines how Ross's work motivates women's intellectual endeavours by presenting a positive example of female intellectual legacy sustained successfully by foremothers.

y, Daisy. "Adventures of an Unromantic Biographer." pp. 247–56.
Investigates some of the questions that arise when one attempts to "write lives together."

ake, Laurel. "Better Together: The Paters and *Ink Work*." pp. 257–65.
Examines the problems of writing women's history and about women's lives; how do women enter history?

ll, Kathleen. "A Place for Ingenuity: Re-imagining the Life of James Watt in a Sequence of Poems." pp. 267–75.
Gives an account of the author's current work writing a long sequence of poems centered on the life and times of the engineer, scientist, and businessman James Watt.

vol. 14, no. 3, 2017, "The Limits of Life Writing," guest edited by David McCooey d Maria Takolander.

Cooey, David. "The Limits of Life Writing." pp. 277–80.
Explores "limits" (including generic, body, media, and nation) as a central thread of life writing scholarship.

itlock, Gillian. "Joe Sacco's Australian Story." pp. 283–95.
Rereads Sacco's comic journalism work on refugees and asylum seekers in the context of his childhood experience as a migrant.

uglas, Kate. "Malala Yousafzai, Life Narrative and the Collaborative Archive." pp. 297–311.
Analyzes an archive of life writing about Pakistani activist Yousafzai to show how a resistant youth identity for educational reform was crafted.

wster, Anne. "Remembering Violence in Alice Pung's *Her Father's Daughter*: The Postmemoir and Diasporisation." pp. 313–25.
Analyzes the family as a frame of transnational and transgenerational mapping in this story of a daughter of a Cambodian genocide survivor.

wn, Adam. "Witnessing Moral Compromise: 'Privilege', Judgement and Holocaust Testimony." pp. 327–39.
Analyzes Benjamin Jacob's memoir *The Dentist of Auschwitz* to expose judgment as a key feature in reading Holocaust testimony.

gdon, Jo. "'A Thing May Happen and Be a Total Lie': Artifice and Trauma in Tim O'Brien's Magical Realist Life Writing." pp. 341–55.
Reveals the convergence between magical realism and testimony when it comes to the representation of trauma in *Going After Cacciato* and *The Things They Carried*.

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Jacques, Juliet. "Forms of Resistance: Uses of Memoir, Theory, and Fiction in Trans L Writing." pp. 357–70.
Reviews trans life writing for a wider public as it shifts from the goal of wanti social acceptance to more varied ways of writing gender-variant lives.

Takolander, Maria. "Confessional Poetry and the Materialisation of an Autobiographi Self." pp. 371–83.
Draws on socio-material scholars of creativity to retheorize confessional poetry terms of the limits of poetic language, not as generated by mental illness.

Driscoll, Oliver. "I Guess What You Say Is True." pp. 387–400.
Reflects on the difficulties of representing the trauma of former Yugoslav through the work of Bosnian-American writers Aleksandar Hemon and Semez Mehmedinović.

———, vol. 14, no. 4, 2017, "Locating Lives: Papers from the Inaugural Regional IA Conference, IABA Asia-Pacific."

Cardell, Kylie, and Kate Douglas. "Locating Lives: Life Writing and the Asia-Pacifi pp. 419–23.
A overview of the International Auto/Biography Association conference with att tion to region and the field.

Whitlock, Gillian. "Salvage: Locating Lives in the Migration Museum." pp. 427–40.
Looks at life narratives that feature memories of child migration to Australia in early 1960s and the artefacts displayed in migration museums, beaches, and boa

Howes, Craig. "Pacifying Asia, Orienting the Pacific: What Work Can a Life-Writi Region Do?" pp. 441–53.
Outlines the theoretical and historical challenges of theorizing or representing Asia/Pacific region as a site for life writing and offers future directions and resp sibilities of collaboration.

Edwards, Natalie. "'En Australie, je parle une langue minoritaire': Catherine Rey's *femme en marche* as Australian Life Writing in French." pp. 455–63.
Interrogates how Rey reinvents herself and her experience of migration throu linguistic play and blending French and English, or "translanguaging."

Allington, Patrick. "On Necessary Disjointedness: The Pol Pot Period in Alice Pun Memoirs." pp. 465–74.
Analyzes Pung's memoirs and narration of her father's refugee experience alongsi other memoirs of survival and loss during Cambodia's Pol Pot period.

Kato, Megumi. "Testimony of War: Australian Memoirs and Fiction of the Pacific Wa pp. 475–84.
Examines first-person memoirs of the postwar years alongside recent novels to co sider war as national memory and an ongoing polyphonic event.

Barnwell, Ashley. "Locating an Intergenerational Self in Postcolonial Family Historie pp. 485–93.
Follows how authors of the Stolen Generations reclaim an intergenerational self in t wake of genocidal policies, focusing on the work of Carmel Bird and Archie Roach

Juckes, Daniel. "Too Much, or Else Too Little: How Exile and Objects Affect Sense Place and Past in Life-Writing Practice." pp. 495–504.

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Draws from the author's own family memoir to consider how objects from the past can be used to evoke melancholy, dislocation, and what James Wood terms "homelooseness."

Neill, Betty Maria. "I Can't Call Australia Home: Finding My Father in the Archives." pp. 505–18.
Discovers a family archive and reconstructs her father's return to Poland after he survived a WWII concentration camp and migrated to Australia.

attacharya, Somdatta. "Narrating Lives/Labour: Documenting Domestic Labour in Kolkata." pp. 519–30.
Reflects on the ethics of life writing research in relation to to oral narratives of women domestic workers and their difficulties in urban public space and with public transportation.

leman, Jenny. "Relocating Lives in the 'Britain of the South': The Influence of Emigrant Advice Manuals on the Public Writings of Nineteenth-Century Female Emigrants." pp. 531–39.
Focuses on life writing that reflects key advice of booster literature promoting emigration to New Zealand and themes of independence, abundance, and status anxiety.

hur, Paul Longley. "Things Fall Apart: Identity in the Digital World." pp. 541–50.
Considers twenty-first-century identity in terms of freedom and chaos, definition and dissolution, and location and placelessnessness.

vol. 132, no. 2, 2017, "The Exotic and the Autoexotic," guest edited by Xiaofan Amy Li.

Xiaofan Amy. "Introduction: From the Exotic to the Autoexotic." pp. 392–96.
Reconsiders exoticism as more fluid and relational, and reviews ideas and definitions of "autoexoticism" as exoticism taken by the other for their own benefit.

setti, Valentina. "Autoexoticism with Promotional Purposes?: Samuel-Henri Berthoud and Provincial Literary Ruse in Nineteenth-Century France." pp. 397–404.
Sheds light on how provincial writers actively reclaimed, fostered, and enhanced exotic identity constructions about their own provinces.

, Peter. "Arguing with Europe: Eastern Civilization versus Orientalist Exoticism." pp. 405–12.
A reading of Beiruti poet and journalist Khalīl al-Khūrī's translation and critique of French poet Alphonse de Lamartine's travel narrative of Syria, Palestine, and the Balkans.

nziata, Daniele. "'The First English Lady Seen in These Parts': Autoexoticizing Race and Gender in Colonial Women's Writing on Cyprus." pp. 413–20.
Analyzes exoticism, autoexoticism, and the relationship between patriarchy and imperialism in travel narratives by nineteenth-century women writers.

obs, Adriana X. "Anna Herman and the Goldberg Variations." pp. 421–26.
Uses Herman's poem as a case study for an autoexotic reading of contemporary Hebrew poetry and its cannibalistic poetics.

manska, Kasia. "Can Mirrors Be Said to Have Memories?: A Polish Katerina Brac Looks Back at her English Reflection." pp. 427–33.
Presents a Polish translation of Christopher Reid's pseudo-translation of a Polish poet as an act of critical autoexoticism.

Xiaofan Amy. "Eating One's Way through Cultures: Antonin Artaud's Autoexoticist Diets and Epistemologies." pp. 434–41.

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Traces Artaud's notion of autoexoticism as throwing open the boundaries of o subjectivity and culture to change and rupture through food and the body.

Sun, Minyan. "Reflections on Autoexoticism by Way of Cortazarian Literature." 442–46.

Reads the work of Julio Cortázar to examine the transformation of the self into other self, and the self inhabiting its own desirous gaze.

Fukuzawa, Naomi Charlotte. "Autoexotic Literary Encounters between Meiji Japan the West: Sōseki Natsume's 'The Tower of London' (1905) and Lafcadio Hea *Kwaidan* (1904)." pp. 447–54.

Juxtaposes self/other constructions of autobiographical writings by exiles du the Meiji era of Japanese-European encounters.

Reynolds, Matthew. "Autoexoticriticism." pp. 455–61.

Reviews the essays in this collection and reflects on how representation and enco ter can impact the way we write and practice criticism.

South Atlantic Quarterly, vol. 116, no. 3, 2017, "After #Ferguson, After #Baltimore: Challenge of Black Death and Black Life for Black Political Thought," guest edited Barnor Hesse and Juliet Hooker.

Hesse, Barnor, and Juliet Hooker. "Introduction: On Black Political Thought In Global Black Protest." pp. 443–56.

Historicizes contemporary protest movements and their contributions to Black litical thought and its anticolonial/antiracial conditions of possibility.

Thompson, Debra. "An Exoneration of Black Rage." pp. 457–81.

Argues for the disruptive and productive dimensions of anger and rage in B Lives Matter activism, as responses to entrenched national narratives of white premacy.

Hooker, Juliet. "Black Protest/White Grievance: On the Problem of White Poli Imaginations Not Shaped by Loss." pp. 483–504.

Analyzes the politicization and mobilization of white grievance in the wak Trump's presidency, in contrast to analyses of Black protest after Ferguson.

Márquez, John D., and Junaid Rana. "Black Radical Possibility and the Decolo International." pp. 505–28.

Assesses current Black protests in US cities, London, and Paris within a Black rad and insurgent tradition and against quarantining rhetorics of reform and progres

Makalani, Minkah. "Black Lives Matter and the Limits of Formal Black Politics." 529–52.

Sketches the grassroots protests in Ferguson as holding decolonial alternative liberal-democratic redress.

Threadcraft, Shatema. "North American Necropolitics and Gender: On #BlackLi Matter and Black Femicide." pp. 553–79.

Examines how Black feminist activists and others challenge official efforts to ass meaning to the bodies of the slain in the context of the politicization of spectac violent deaths.

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Reads the n-phrase as reinscribing a post-civil rights archive of police killings of Black civilians and a logic of white sovereignty revealed by Black protests.

, vol. 116, no. 3, 2017, "Unrecognizable: On Trans Recognition in 2017," guest dited by Aren Aizura.

izura, Aren. "Introduction: Against the Day." pp. 606–11.
Questions the importance of recognition alongside contemporary analysis of political economy, racialization, and the violence of liberalism.

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Reads a closed-circuit television scene of Duanna Johnson, a Black transgender woman brutally beaten in police custody, in the context of positive and assimilative mainstream media representation of trans lives.

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Analyzes the 2016 wave of anti-trans bathroom bills, state violence and policing, and imagined scenes of encounter, and reaches for new possibilities within feminism and left coalitional politics.

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Explores narratives of desired future selves to propose the usefulness of narrative as a tool to educate desire through imagination.

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Emphasizes dancing and the creation of the powwow.
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A collaborative autoethnography of the transnational food histories of Newfoundland and Suriname, creating an "unsettled palate" and connections between colonial and slavery legacies.

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Review of French and Francophone disability studies compared to Anglophone fields, tracing influences of life writing, literature, politics, and activism.

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Reviews Japanese-language materials to describe Tsurumi Kazuko's impact on the Institute for the Science of Thought, revealing the influence of women on postwar Japanese intellectual life.

Ware, Syrus Marcus. "All Power to All People?: Black LGBTTI2QQ Activism, Remembrance, and Archiving in Toronto." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 2017, pp. 170–80.

Considers the erasure of racialized and Indigenous histories from white trans archives alongside interventions to reinscribe Blackness within histories of resistance.

Watson, Julia. "Parsua Bashi's *Nylon Road*: Visual Witnessing and the Critique of Neoliberalism in Iranian Women's Graphic Memoir." *Contemporary Muslim Women's Voices*, special issue of *Gender Forum*, vol. 65, 2017, pp. 73–101.

A critical reading of how the narrating I interrogates eleven of her former selves to weigh the competing belief systems of Iranian fundamentalism and Western secular humanism in Switzerland, where Bashi was a migrant.

Wedel, Gudrun. "Autobiographische Effekte und ihr Einfluss auf die Selbstpräsentation: Normalisierung—Profilierung—Retrojektion—Serialität." *Autobiographische Diskurse von Frauen 1900–1950*, edited by Montserrat Bascoy and Lorena Silos Ribas, Königshausen & Neumann GmbH, 2017, pp. 45–54.

Examines how the autobiographical effects of normalization, of creating an image for oneself of retrojection, and of seriality enhance the possibilities of self-presentation and shape the communication with readers.

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Wilson, Sonia Catherine. "Coming to One's Senses: Diaries and the Materiality of Mourn

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DISSERTATIONS

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Anish, Beth O. "Writing Irish America: Communal Memory and the Narrative of Nation Diaspora." University of Rhode Island, 2017.

Employs theories of home and nation to autobiographical Irish American writing.

Anstey, Jennifer. "Decision Processes of Emigrants from Nazi Germany." University of Rochester, 2017.

Reads memoirs to study developmental decision-making in the lives of middle-aged adult

Bauer, Mark. "Lyric Spaces: Past Tense Speakers in Late Twentieth-Century Poetry." University of California, Berkeley, 2017.

Redefines the lyric genre by focusing on past tense and the resistance between the lyric and the autobiographical "I"in the work of Robert Lowell, Seamus Heaney, Elizabeth Bish and Ted Hughes.

Brown, Ashley N. "The Match of Her Life: Althea Gibson, Icon and Instrument of Integration." The George Washington University, 2017.

A life writing study of Gibson, making visible a more nuanced portrait of the expansiven and limits of sports in creating opportunities for African American women.

Brückner, Florian. "Werner Beumelburg (1899–1963): Leben und Werk." Universität Stu gart, 2017.

Negotiates how Beumelburg's books, especially their reception, helped create a nationa atmosphere in Germany whereby the Nazis could rise to power.

Browne, Katherine A. "Body Composition: Reading, Writing, and Resisting Weight L Autobiography as Biopolitical Pedagogy." Illinois State University, 2017.

Historicizes weight-loss autobiography within disability life writing in the US from the nineteenth century to the present and offers resistant forms and pedagogies of body-ba memoir.

Bruce, Kayla A. "Performativity, Positionality, and Relationality: Identity Pathways fo Feminist Rhetorical Pedagogy." Arizona State University, 2017.

Brings autobiographical theory and food memoir to a feminist pedagogy for university-le writing classrooms.

Burgess, Melissa A. "Constructing a Life, Constructing the Self: Memory, Trauma, and Fra mented Subjectivity in the Autobiographical Life Writing of Dorothy Allison, Lyn Barry, and Joan Wickersham." Saint Louis University, 2017.

Analyzes contemporary women's life writing to explore the fracturing and unstable autobi graphical "I."

Carbone, Kathy M. "Moving Records: Artistic Interventions and Activisms in the Archive University of California, Los Angeles, 2017.

An ethnography and object biography of the artist-in-residence program in Portland and t

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Life writing vignettes framed by theory and pedagogy that explore the influences of emotional trauma, social attachment, and social media on the writing of life narrative.

Foreman, Mozelle S. "The Praxis of Quotation in Transitional Latin American Literatures." Cornell University, 2017.
Looks at literary biographies, transcriptions of memoirs, and other texts for the function of quotation in narrative voice and politicizing a life.

Franklin, Sara B. "The Editor's Life, in Her Own Words: A Feminist Oral History of Judith Jones and Her Life in Modern American Food Culture." New York University, 2017.
An oral history and critical reflection on methodology in writing the life and career of a successful woman publisher.

Gemmill, Kathleen K. "Novel Conversations, 1740–1817." Columbia University, 2017.
Examines the development of authentic speech and conversation, or "transcriptional realism," in eighteenth-century literature and drama.

Gothard, J. A. "A Hard Life's Work: Cultural Memory and the Working Class Novel of the British Isles, 1900–1920." University of Miami, 2017.
Restructures the canon of working-class literature by exploring formal qualities of the nascent working-class novel.

Gregory, Megan A. "Entangled Bodies in the Medieval World: Anglo-Saxon Life Writing, Prefaces, Hagiography, and Letters." Illinois State University, 2017.
Draws from feminist new materialism to broaden life writing studies by including non-traditional pre-modern texts.

Hammond, Yvonne M. S. "Storytelling, Survival, and Child Figures in Contemporary American Life-Writing." West Virginia University, 2017.
Explores survival strategies within narratives that share traumatic and unjust pasts and children's experiences as victims of institutional and family violence.

Henry, Patrick T. "Resisting Tyranny, Resisting Stasis: British Modernism, the Artist-Critic, and the Function of Criticism, 1895–1940." The George Washington University, 2017.
Reclaims the value of art and aesthetics within various genres of critical nonfiction, including literary biography, through the work of Oscar Wilde, Rebecca West, Virginia Woolf, and Hugh MacDiarmid.

Ho, Aaron K. H. "Shame, Darwin, and Other Victorian Writers." City University of New York, 2017.
Explores Darwin's secularization of shame and how this shaped identity and sexuality in writing by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Elizabeth Gaskell, John Addington Symonds, and Havelock Ellis.

Jampol, Noah S. "Science Fiction as Ethical Response to the Holocaust: Philip Roth and Jew

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ish American Fiction." The Catholic University of America, 2017.
is at Roth's turn to science fiction tropes as part of a larger shift of memory, narrative, estimony from realistic modes of representing the Holocaust.

ara, Samuel A. S. "Life Writing the Civil War of Sierra Leone: Appropriation, (Mis) Representation, and Erasure." Illinois State University, 2017.
ores the univocality of cross-cultural collaboratively produced post-civil-war memoirs Sierra Leone and offers postmodern reading methods to find more nuanced ways of ing war memoir.

ht, Jason. "Intimacy and Complicity: The Shared Spaces of the Letter and *Let Fall a Stocking*." University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2017.
emoir framed by a critical poetics of epistolarity and voyeurism.

opoulos, Zachary L. "Constructing Origen: Christian Biography in Late Antiquity." Saint Louis University, 2017.
ses on the reception of the North African theologian Origen of Alexandria by analyzing ent biographies of him written over a period of time.

s, Erin M. "Becoming American: Revolutionary Exiles and the Shaping of the Early American Republic." University of Notre Dame, 2017.
nines the life experiences of a core group of reformers from France, Ireland, and the ed Kingdom to question the coexistence of radical political ideologies and proslavery ments.

man, Laura J. "The Beat Goes On: Women Writers of the Beat Generation." The University of Iowa, 2017.
nceptualizes the Beat movement by focusing on women's writing and communities s multiple genres, including memoir and interviews.

enfeld, Kathryn A. "Forging a History: The Inventions and Intellectual Community of the *Historia Augusta*." Duke University, 2017.
amines the fourth-century series of Latin imperial biographies known as the Historia sta and the generic debate over seeing these texts as fraudulent or entertainment.

n, Scott M. "Enthusiastic Sensations: Religious Revivals, Secular Bodies, and the Making of Modern Sexualities in Early American Culture." The George Washington University, 2017.
's eighteenth-century texts in historical and religious contexts, including Benjamin dlin's *Autobiography* and lesser-known spiritual autobiographies.

Terry Allen, II. "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Preaching of Asahel Nettleton in the Second Great Awakening." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017.
dy of the relationship between Nettleton's life and theological rhetoric.

g, Lai Y. "Returning the Light to Shine and Smile Within and Without: A Buddhist Moral-

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Democratic Currere in Third Space." Teachers College, Columbia University, 2017.
Creates curriculum theory out of an autobiographical study bridging subjectivity and Buddhist morality.

Lewis-Turner, Jessica. "Fantasizing Hermaphroditism: Two-Sexed Metaphors in Nineteenth Century American Literature and Culture." Temple University, 2017.
Close reading and historicization of fiction and nonfiction, including *Autobiography of an Androgyne*.

Lingold, Mary C. "Sonic Records: Listening to Afro-Atlantic Literature and Music, 1650–1860." Duke University, 2017.
Turns to European observer memoir and African American performers' biography to uncover an archive of early African diasporic musical life and the interdependence of literature and sound.

Lundblad Janjic, Linnea J. "Writer or Witness: Problems of Varlam Shalamov's Late Prose and Dramaturgy." University of California, Berkeley, 2017.
Analyzes Shalamov's changes in literature and autobiography in relation to the moral and formal demands of Russian literature, censorship, and his experience of exile.

Martin, Angela F. "Writing to Exist: Transformation and Translation into Exile." Florida Atlantic University, 2017.
Analyzes letters of a Spanish Civil War exile/Catalonian anarchist, Martín Herrera de Mendoza/Antonio Vidal Arabí, and the dual identity he created to survive.

McIntire, Earl H. "'Raised Money by Hook and Crook, Got My Paper Out': Sunshine and Shadow in the Life Seasons of Editor and Physician Dr. Elihu S. McIntire (1832–1899)." The University of Utah, 2017.
Offers a cultural biography of McIntire, drawing on his diaries and journalism.

Morris, C. "Secular Relics: Narrative Objects and Material Biography in the Museums of Darwin, Elgar & Holmes." University of the West of England, Bristol, 2017.
Investigates objects and their display in museums as relic-like and products of modernity.

Oliver, Adrienne D. "'Tell Me a Story': Using Critical Hip Hop Narratives to Decolonize College Composition." Mills College, 2017.
Analyzes memoir and student interviews to argue for the impact of a hip-hop writing curriculum on identity formation and student agency.

Pittner, Katherine. "Circumventing the Gatekeepers: A Consideration of Selected Self-Published Histories in the United States, 2010–2015." The University of Arizona, 2017.
Analyzes life writing and other nontraditional histories written by ordinary people and published by Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing to consider the impact of more egalitarian publishing practices on the public sphere.

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enberry, Krista. "Reading at the Intersection of Modernist, Feminist, and Lifewriting Studies." Pennsylvania State University, 2016.

lops a methodology of feminist literary scholarship that is fundamentally interdisci-ry, with consideration for the histories and complementarity of modernist American ture, life writing studies, and feminist theory.

d, Philip C. "Countess, Conductor, Pioneer: Lady Radnor and the Phenomenon of the Victorian Ladies' Orchestra." The University of Iowa, 2017.

es the transition of aristocratic women from salon to professional concert hall, and the ct of philanthropy on women's performance careers.

n, Renee-Michele. "Confessions in Fiction, Opera, and Memoir: Subversive Elements of Courtesan Celebrity in Nineteenth-Century Paris." The Florida State University, 2017.

es whether or not a "fallen" woman can be rehabilitated by examining the use of celeb-s reinvention within confessional narratives.

effer, Tesla. "Legible Grief: Discursive Liminality in Twentieth Century Literatures of Trauma." University of Washington, 2017.

venes in scholarship on trauma and affect studies to position literature as a source of wledge about how grief becomes legible in discourse, emphasizing the impact of trau-c recognition on subjectivity.

ack, Michael. "Jean Berger's Staged Choruses as a Concurrence of Biographical and Artistic Reinvention." The University of Iowa, 2017.

vs on Berger's unpublished memoirs and correspondence to reveal his Jewish back-nd, continuous self-reinvention, and various influences that led him to develop a new of choral music.

in, S. A. "Designing Community: Architecture, Race and Democracy in American Life Writing, 1900–1950." Duke University, 2017.

ines autobiographies by Louis Sullivan, Anzia Yezierska, and Richard Wright that use tectural metaphors to enforce or challenge the democratizing project of American cities.

d, Martin P. "Inventing Free Speech: Authority and Genre in the *Historia Augusta*." Indiana University, 2017.

s the *Historia Augusta* as clever invention and manipulation of genre to construct a space ite honest political history under an authoritarian government.

; Garrett W. "Adult Children of Late Life Divorce: A Journey into the Experience of a Changing Family." The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2017.

tical autoethnography drawing on Campbell's theory of the hero's journey.

nson, Anna. "Féminisme Oblige: Katharine Susan Anthony and the Birth of Modern Feminist Biography, 1877–1929." City University of New York, 2017.

es that Anthony was the progenitor of a new form—modern feminist biography—cru-

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cial to understanding modern feminism, modern biography, and women writing history the early twentieth century.

Smith, Dale W. "The Victorian Preacher's Malady: The Metaphorical Usage of Gout in Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon." University of Missouri, Kansas City, 2017.

Considers the performance of Christian manliness and religious leadership framed by public transformation of the body suffering from gout.

Tuma, Virginia C. "The Cuban Diaspora and the Question of Nostalgia." Duke Univers 2017.

Explores the dominant nostalgic politics of memory prevalent in post-Revolutionary Cul American cultural production, including autobiography and fiction.

Walsh, John P. "Henry Murray and Personology: Investigation of Phenomenological Char teristics in Theoretical Development." The Chicago School of Professional Psycholo 2017.

Investigates the impact of Murray's life experiences on his theories of personality.

Witcher, Heather B. "Sympathetic Texts: Collaborative Writing in the Long Nineteer Century (1814–1909)." Saint Louis University, 2017.

Investigates literary collaborative communities to argue for an understanding of selfhc rooted in Victorian liberalism and embodied in the act of collaboration.

Wolf, Jonathan T. "Liberating Blackness: African-American Prison Writers and the Creat of the Black Revolutionary." Fordham University, 2017.

Traces how revolutionary Black identities were created from experiences with the carc system and discusses in particular a model of Black female intersubjectivity from the work Angela Davis and Assata Shakur.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Rose Mary Allen is an anthropologist from Curaçao with a PhD from the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. She works as a consultant and as a part-time lecturer at the University of Curaçao. She is the author of the book *Di ki manera: A Social History of Afro-Curaçaoans, 1863–1917* (SWP, 2007), which draws largely on oral histories she has collected. She has published, copublished, and edited several books and articles on the cultural and social history of Curaçao with special attention to cultural heritage, migration and diaspora, gender studies, and cultural diversity. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher for two NWO (De Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek) scientific research projects, "Traveling Caribbean Heritage" and "Cultural Practices or Citizenship under Conditions of Fragmented Sovereignty: Gendered and Sexual Citizenship in Curaçao and Bonaire."

Jaume Aurell is a professor of medieval history and historiography at the University of Navarra (Spain). He has published *Authoring the Past: History, Autobiography, and Politics in Medieval Catalonia* (U of Chicago P, 2012), *Theoretical Perspectives on Historians' Autobiographies* (Routledge, 2016), and *Genealogía de Occidente* (Pensódromo, 2017). He has edited *Rethinking Historical Genres in the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2017). He is now completing his research on medieval self-coronations.

Sergio da Silva Barcellos is conducting postdoctorate research at Universidade Unigranrio, Rio de Janeiro, through the national postdoctoral program (PNPD) of the Capes Foundation, from the Ministry of Education of Brazil. He received his masters and PhD degrees in literary studies from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro in 2004 and 2009, respectively. He teaches an annual seminar on diary studies at the Rio de Janeiro State University and developed a postdoctoral research project on time, memory, and diary writing cosponsored by Hofstra University and the Capes Foundation. Barcellos was recently granted an award from Fundação Nacional de Artes, Brazil (FUNARTE), to organize, classify, and publish a guide to Carolina Maria de Jesus's archival collection.

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Alana Bell has a PhD in English with a focus in life writing theory from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and was a contributing reviewer to *Biography*'s Reviewed Elsewhere for several years. She teaches at the Bishop Strachan School in Toronto.

Graciela de Garay has a PhD in history. She is a full researcher at the Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. Luis Mora in Mexico City, specializing in twentieth-century urban and architectural history, and is the author of *Mario Pani: vida y obra* (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Arquitectura, 2004). She was a founding member and vice president of both the Mexican Oral History Association and the International Oral History Association, and was coeditor of the bilingual journal *Words and Silences/Palabras y Silencios*.

Leigh Gilmore is the author of *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives* (Columbia UP, 2017); *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Cornell UP, 2001); *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (Cornell UP, 1994); and a coeditor of *Autobiography and Postmodernism* (U of Massachusetts P, 1994). Her articles on life writing, feminist theory, law, trauma, testimony, and graphic narrative appear in *SIGNS*, *Feminist Studies*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *Biography*, *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, *Profession*, *Prose Studies*, *Law & Literature*, and *American Imago*, among others, and in numerous collections, including *Contemporary Trauma Narratives: Liminality and the Ethics of Form* (Routledge, 2014); *Telling Tales: Autobiographies of Childhood and Youth* (Routledge, 2014); *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels* (U of Wisconsin P, 2011); and *Teaching Life Writing Texts* (MLA, 2008), among others. She has been a professor of English at Ohio State University and Dorothy Cruikshank Backstrand Chair of Women's and Gender Studies at Scripps College, and has held visiting appointments at UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, Northeastern University, Harvard Divinity School, and Brown University. She is currently a distinguished visiting professor of women's and gender studies at Wellesley College. She writes for the online journalism platform *The Conversation* and has appeared as a guest analyst on sexual harassment and the #MeToo campaign on the PBS News Hour and National Public Radio, among other outlets. With Elizabeth Marshall, she is coauthor of a new book on youth, life narrative, trauma, and social justice forthcoming from Fordham UP in 2019.

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Gunnthorunn Gudmundsdottir is a professor of comparative literature at the University of Iceland. Her research interests include life writing, memory studies, and contemporary literature. She focusses in particular on the politics of public and private memory in literature and culture. She has published widely on these issues, including her two books, *Borderlines: Autobiography and Fiction in Postmodern Life Writing* (Rodopi, 2003) and *Representations of Forgetting in Life Writing and Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Jeroen Heuvel worked for over twenty-five years as a theatermaker in Curaçao, Belgium, and the Netherlands. He became a teacher in 2000 and earned a master's in education in Papiamentu in 2011. He writes book reviews for the blog Werkgroep Caraïbische Letteren.

Sam Ikehara received her BA and MA in English from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and is currently a PhD student in the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California.

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki, PhD, is an adjunct professor and a senior lecturer in the Department of Cultural History at the University of Turku and a vice-director of SELMA: Centre for the Study of Storytelling, Experientiality and Memory. She has published widely both in Finland and in international publications and journals on the cultural history of women's writing, on the methodology, theory, and tradition of biography, as well as on the methodology of autobiographical sources. She has also been part of several Nordic and European networks, such as the European Network on the Theory and Practice of Biography. Her most recent publication is a coedited volume, *Biography, Gender and History: Nordic Perspectives* (k&h-publishing, 2016).

Ioana Luca, an associate professor at National Taiwan Normal University, teaches American studies, life writing, and memory studies. Her publications include articles in *Social Text*, *Rethinking History*, *Prose Studies*, *Biography*, *European Journal of Life Writing*, and *Journal of American Studies*, as well as chapters in several edited volumes such as *Eastern Europe Unmapped* (Berghahn Books, 2017). She is the recipient of the 2015 Academia Sinica Young Scholar Award and has served as editor in chief of *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies*.

Alessandro Nicola Malusà is a dress historian, costume curator, and translator. He is a graduate of Central Saint Martins, the Warburg Institute, and the University of Cambridge. His previous academic research has focused on the sartorial culture of the House of Savoy throughout the early modern period.

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He has curated two fashion exhibitions at the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco ("Princess Grace: More Than an Image," Villa Sauber, 2012, and "Le Boudoir de Joséphine," Villa Sauber, 2015–2016) and is collaborating on an upcoming exhibition of seventeenth-century Polish textiles at Turin's Palazzo Madama. Fluent in English, Italian, and Polish, and proficient in French, he works as a translator and occasional interpreter for private individuals, cultural institutions, and online projects such as the Google Arts & Culture platform.

Joanny Moulin, senior member of the Institut Universtaire de France and professor of Anglophone literature at Aix-Marseille University, is president of the Biography Society. He is the author of several biographies and is currently involved in a research program on biography as a literary genre. His most recent publications are "Lives of the Poets: Poetry & Biography" in *Études anglaises*, "Towards Biography Theory" in *Cercles*, and "Great Biographers" in *The Great Historical Figures in Art and Literature*.

Gabriel Jaime Murillo-Arango has a PhD in education from the Universidad de Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia, where he is now a professor in the Department of Education. Murillo-Arango is a member of the research group Formaph: Formación de Maestros y Antropología Histórica-Pedagógica de Universidad de Antioquia, which focuses on teacher training and pedagogical anthropology. He is a cofounder and member of the IABA-Americas chapter and coordinator of the biennial International Symposium on Educational Narratives, also in Medellín. His areas of interest include biographical narratives in education, pedagogical memory, and the history, philosophy, and sociology of education.

Pramod K. Nayar, of the Department of English at the University of Hyderabad, India, has most recently published *Bhopal's Ecological Gothic: Disaster, Precarity and the Biopolitical Uncanny* (Lexington Books, 2018) and *Human Rights and Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), in addition to essays on genomics and autobiography, graphic biographies, and others in *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, *Biography*, and others.

Gerardo Necoechea has a PhD in history, specializing in US and Latin American social history. He is a researcher and professor at the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City and the author of *Parentesco, comunidad y clase: Mexicanos en Chicago, 1916–1950* (INAH, 2015). He is currently working on a history of Mexican workers and the Left in the 1970s.

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Tom Overton is writing the first full biography of the writer and artist John Berger (1926–2017) for Allen Lane. He edited *Portraits: John Berger on Artists* (Verso, 2015), and *Landscapes: John Berger on Art* (Verso, 2016). He is an archive curator at the Barbican Centre, London, and a postdoctoral fellow at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He tweets @tw_overton; his website is overton.tw.

Heui-Yung Park is an assistant professor of English at Kyungil University in South Korea. She has published *Korean and Korean American Life Writing in Hawai'i: From the Land of the Morning Calm to Hawai'i Nei* (Lexington Books, 2016). Her research interests include life writing studies, diaspora studies, Asian American literature—including Korean American literature—and Korean literature.

Hans Renders holds a chair in the history and theory of biography at Groningen University, the Netherlands, where he is also the director of the Biography Institute. He is chair of the national digital Biographical Portal, vice president of the Biography Society, and member of the board of Biographers International Organization, the jury of the Plutarch Award for best English-language biography, and a board member of De Nederlandse Biografie Prijs. He is a book reviewer for the newspaper *Het Parool* and *Historisch Nieuwsblad*. He has published on theory and biography in book-length works that include *Theoretical Approaches to Biography* (with Binne de Haan, Brill, 2014) and *The Biographical Turn: Lives in History* (with Binne de Haan and Jonne Harmsma, Routledge, 2016), along with two biographies: *Zo meen ik dat ook jij bent: Biografie van Jan Hanlo* (De Arbeiderspers, 1998; augmented edition, De Bezige Bij, 2007) and *Wie weet slaag ik in de dood: Biografie van Jan Campert* (De Bezige Bij, 2004). He is working in collaboration with Sjoerd van Faassen on the biography of Theo van Doesburg.

Paweł Rodak is a historian of Polish culture and an associate professor at the Paris-Sorbonne University, where he has been the director of the Centre de Civilisation Polonaise since 2016. He is also a professor at the University of Warsaw, where he was the head of the Institute of Polish Culture from 2012–2016. He is a member of research group Cultures et sociétés d'Europe orientale, balkanique et médiane, and the research group Genèse et Autobiographie. He is also a member of the Association pour l'Autobiographie et le Patrimoine Autobiographique and the International Auto/Biography Association. His main publications are *Wizje kultury pokolenia wojennego* (Wydawnictwo Funna, 2000); an edition of Andrzej Trzebiński's *Pamiętnik* (Iskry, 2001); and *Pismo, książka, lektura: Rozmowy* (2009), *Między zapisem a*

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literaturą: Dziennik polskiego pisarza w XX wieku (2011); *Antropologia pisma: Od teorii do praktyki*, edited with Philippe Artières (2009); *Kulturologia polska XX wieku*, vols. 1 and 2 (2013); *Leksykon gatunków twórczości słownej* (2014); and an edition of Philippe Lejeune's *"Drogi zeszycie . . .", "drogi ekranie . . ." O dziennikach osobistych* (2010), all from Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

Carl Rollyson, professor emeritus of journalism at Baruch College, CUNY, has published biographies of Marilyn Monroe, Lillian Hellman, Martha Gellhorn, Norman Mailer, Rebecca West, Susan Sontag, Jill Craigie, Michael Foot, Sylvia Plath, Amy Lowell, Dana Andrews, Walter Brennan, and several studies of biography, including *Confessions of a Serial Biographer* (McFarland and Company, 2016). He is at work on two books, *This Alarming Paradox: The Life of William Faulkner* (U of Virginia P, forthcoming) and *The Last Days of Sylvia Plath* (UP of Mississippi, forthcoming).

Edgard Sankara, originally from Burkina Faso, teaches French and Francophone literatures at the University of Delaware. He specializes in autobiographical studies, postcolonial studies, reception studies, and rhetoric. He is the author of two monographs, *Postcolonial Francophone Autobiographies: from Africa to the Antilles* (U of Virginia P, 2011) and *Récits de vie au Burkina Faso: Enjeux, rhétorique, réception* (L'Harmattan, 2016).

Ilaria Serra is an associate professor of Italian and comparative studies at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). Her research spans from Italian cinema and literature to the history of Italian immigration to the United States. She was born in Venice, Italy, where she leads the FAU Summer Study Abroad program. She is currently working on a book about the last two centuries of Italian history through songs.

Chen Shen is a PhD candidate in the Institute of Humanities, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. Her PhD project explores life writing by and about Chinese people in Hawai'i.

Nick Mdika Tembo earned his PhD from Stellenbosch University, South Africa, in Eastern African trauma narratives of civil wars. His research interests include African genocides and conflicts, African life writing, African popular literatures, Eastern African diasporic fiction, Malawian poetry and prose, migration African literatures, trauma and cultural studies, traumics and the interface between literature and history, politics, psychology, and the medical humanities. He has published a number of journal articles in these areas. Outside his academic life, Tembo consults on human rights for women and

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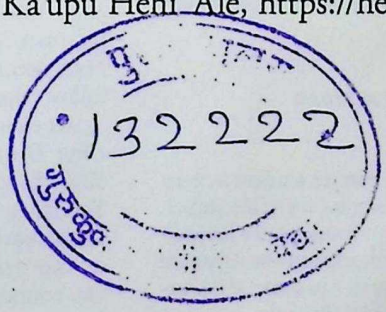
children and on the education of girls. He is currently an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Literary Studies in English at Rhodes University, South Africa.

David Veltman is a PhD student at the Biography Institute at Groningen University, where he is working on a biography of the Flemish artist Felix de Boeck. He is a member of the organizing committee of the 2018 biography conference "Different Lives: Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies," and he is a freelance reporter for the Dutch art magazines *Atelier* and *kM*.

Gillian Whitlock is a professor of English in the School of Communication and Arts at the University of Queensland and a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. She is the author of *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (Continuum, 2000), *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago UP, 2006), and *Postcolonial Life Narrative: Transits of Testimony* (Oxford UP, 2015). She is the editor of *Autographs: Contemporary Australian Autobiography* (U of Queensland P, 1996), *Uncertain Beginnings* (with Gail Reekie, U of Queensland P, 1992), *Contemporary Australian Women's Writing* (U of Queensland P, 1989), and *Trauma Texts* (with Kate Douglas, Routledge, 2009). She has edited two special issues of *Biography*, *Autographics* (with Anna Poletti) in 2008 and *Posthuman Lives* (with Thomas G. Couser) in 2012, which won the CELJ prize for best special issue for that year. She is currently working on a book on archives and asylum-seeker testimony.

Aiko Yamashiro is a poet, teacher, and PhD student of decolonial literatures at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She has blogged about decolonial love and community building at Ke Ka'upu Hehi 'Ale, https://hehiale.wordpress.com.



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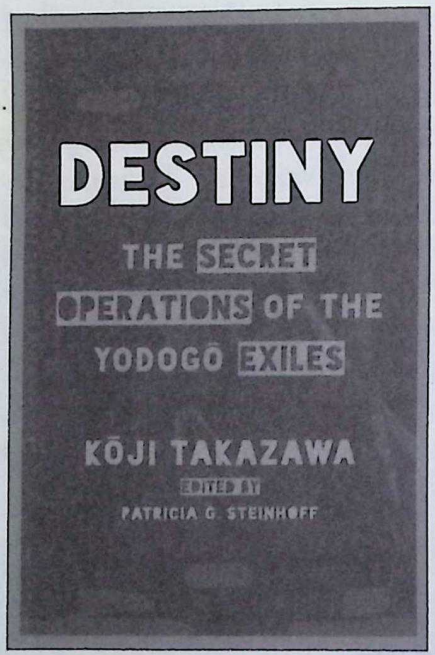
DESTINY

The Secret Operations of the Yodogō Exiles

BY KŌJI TAKAZAWA, EDITED BY PATRICIA G. STEINHOFF



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Kōji Takazawa is a former student activist who later went on to become a prolific author, editor, and independent investigative journalist. He is a leading authority on the Japanese New Left and has close ties to some of its surviving participants and institutions.

Patricia G. Steinhoff is professor of sociology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

In 1970, nine members of a Japanese New Left gro called the Red Army Faction hijacked a domestic ai liner to North Korea with dreams of acquiring the mi itary training to bring about a revolution in Japan. T North Korean government accepted the hijackers—w became known in the media as the Yodogō group, bas on the name of the hijacked plane—and two years la they announced their conversion to *juche*, North Korea's new political ideology. Little was heard from t exiles until 1988, when a member of Yodogō was une pectedly arrested in Japan, and communications wi the group opened up in the context of his trial.

As a former Red Army Faction member, journali Kōji Takazawa made several trips to North Korea, ree tablished his ties to the group's leader Takamaro Tam ya, and helped to publish the group's writings in Japa After Kim Il Sung revealed that Yodogō members h Japanese wives, Takazawa published a book of int views with the women, but in the process became sus cious about the romantic stories they told. He also wo dered about the members who were missing and learn more details in long, private conversations with Tami After Tamiya's sudden death in 1995, Takazawa launch his own investigation of what the group had actua been doing for two decades, even traveling to Europe follow traces there.

An example of superb investigative journalism, *D tiny: The Secret Operations of the Yodogō Exiles* offe Kōji Takazawa's powerful story of how he exposed t Yodogō group's involvement in the kidnapping and h ing of several young Japanese to North Korea, as w as the truth behind their Japanese wives' presence the country. Takazawa's careful research was validat in 2002, when the North Korean government publi acknowledged it had kidnapped thirteen Japanese ci zens during the 1970s and 1980s, including three peo whom Takazawa had connected to the Yodogō hijacke Embedded in his pursuit toward what truly happened the Yodogō members is Takazawa's personal reflection the 1970s, a decade when radical student activism swe Japan, and what it meant to those whose lives were f ever changed.

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